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New agency 'will not tell people what to eat'

£100-a-shop levy planned to pay for food safety

By NICHOLAS WATT, MICHAEL HORNSEY AND ROBIN YOUNG

EVERY food shop and caterer in Britain faces a £100 levy to finance the new food safety watchdog announced by Dr Jack Cunningham yesterday.

The flat charge would apply to anyone dealing in food — from manufacturers to hotels and from village corner shops to hypermarkets — to raise more than half the £100 million cost of setting up the Food Standards Agency.

The agency will be independent of the Government and have powers to set standards, monitor safety and offer advice on diet and nutrition — although Dr Cunningham, the Minister of Agriculture, promised: "It will not tell people what they must eat."

Dr Cunningham said that the agency would answer not to his ministry, but to the Department of Health, and would have "overarching powers" across the food chain to protect consumers' interests.

But while the plans, announced in a White Paper entitled *The Food Standards Agency: A Force for Change*, were welcomed by producers and consumers alike, there was some consternation about the licensing system to raise £60 million towards setting up the agency.

The White Paper says: "The Government considers that the most appropriate mechanism for shifting the burden of cost away from the taxpayer towards the industry would be to introduce a comprehensive system of registration or licensing with fees. Such a scheme would both extend and consolidate the existing registration and meet the costs associated with the new agency."

But the Food and Drink Federation described it as the equivalent of a "food poll tax" that would inevitably be passed on to customers and push up prices. Michael



"We're saved! It's the food safety agency"

Mackenzie, the federation's director-general, said: "The weekly shopping bill will be increased as a result of the proposed tax on food."

Dr Cunningham later said that the fee was only a proposal, which was open for consultation, and he suggested that small businesses might be exempted — although he also pointed out that many food scares had originated from small butchers. The worst example was the E.coli outbreak which was traced to a Scottish butcher's shop.

The Government's proposals are largely a response to such incidents and to restore public confidence. Dr Cunningham told MPs: "Our proposals represent a radical approach in which the clear priority is to protect public health. The agency will be a powerful new body, able to publish its advice to ministers, free of vested interests and able to act clearly and decisively at all stages of the food chain."

The agency will be run by a chief executive with a commission of 12 experts backed by independent advisory committees and civil servants and will have the power to

censure the Agriculture Ministry if it fails to provide sufficient safeguards. Until now, the Agriculture Ministry has been responsible for monitoring food safety as well as for promoting the interests of the food industry.

Dr Cunningham said: "By eliminating the confusion and uncertainty surrounding the arrangements for dealing with food safety and standards issues, the agency will be able to deliver real benefits to consumers, retailers and the food industry alike."

His announcement was almost universally welcomed. The Consumers' Association said it was the "best news" after a decade of food scares. "It looks as if consumers will get what we have been asking for: a robust and independent agency which will reach right along the food chain from plough to plate."

The Association for Public Health said that with seven out of ten cases of cancer and three out of ten cases of coronary heart disease being food related, it was vital that the agency took diet and nutrition under its wing. In the Commons, Dr Cunningham had said: "The agency will aim to help people who want to be healthier to choose a suitable diet. It will not tell people what they must eat."

Professor Philip James of Aberdeen University, whose report formed the backbone of the White Paper, said he was surprised and delighted by the extent to which his proposals had been adopted. He did not think the agency would improve safety overnight, "but I would hope that in three to five years, the incidence of food poisoning will have levelled off or be diminishing."

Price of safety, page 4



Craig Wagner, a conservationist, hugs Tari, a white Bengal tiger, at his home in Forest Lake, Minnesota. But anxious neighbours have won a fight to close his Centre for Endangered Cats

Tory MPs support Hague on leader's election

By PHILIP WEBSTER
POLITICAL EDITOR
AND POLLY NEWTON

TORY MPs voted overwhelmingly last night to give up their right to elect party leaders in a firm endorsement of William Hague's reform plans.

Future leaders will be chosen by the 350,000 party members in a one-member-one-vote system, although they will be selecting from a list of candidates submitted by the MPs.

Under proposals backed by more than 100 of the 162 Tory MPs, there will be a "primary" election among Conservative MPs to decide the leading contenders at Westminster for election. Thereafter the choice will rest with ordinary members.

Mr Hague last night hailed the "historic decision" as a "decisive break with the past that shows that the Conservative Party at all levels is embracing my programme of radical reform."

Party MPs also decided to end the system of automatic annual elections. In future Conservative leaders will only be removed if a stated proportion of MPs call for a vote of confidence. The vote on what that threshold should be will be taken next week, but indications last night were that the figure would be 25 per cent of the parliamentary party or 45 MPs, whichever is lower.

That means that any move to remove Mr Hague over the next year would require a high number of MPs to put their heads over the parapet and call for his removal.

Conservative MPs declared last night that the decision made the party more democratic than Labour, which still elects its leader by an electoral college involving the unions. Labour countered that if the new system had been in place six months ago Kenneth Clarke, and not Mr Hague, would be leader of the Tory party.

That was a reference to the big majorities for Mr Clarke in votes among party members. This was also noted by a number of Eurosceptic MPs who voted against change for that reason. In

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Norway 12.00, Portugal 12.00, Singapore 12.00,
Spain 12.00, Sweden 12.00, Switzerland 12.00,
Taiwan 12.00, Thailand 12.00, USA 12.00,
South Africa 12.00



Blair promises reforms will not betray the poor

By PHILIP WEBSTER AND JILL SHERMAN

TONY BLAIR today offers a personal guarantee that Labour will never desert the genuinely needy as it builds a new welfare system.

In an article in *The Times*, the Prime Minister says that the welfare state is no longer a pathway out of poverty, a route into work or a gateway to dignity in retirement. Instead it is a "dead end for too many people."

He adds: "I want to clear the way to a new system. The status quo is not an option." He will underline that tonight when he starts a national tour to sell his reforms. He will tell a party audience in the West Midlands that while his Government would consult and listen, he was determined to see his programme through.

Several MPs are, however, worried that the Prime Minister does not have a coherent strategy for his welfare re-

forms, judging from the piecemeal ideas that have been leaked.

Mr Blair will try to reassure them — and those who fear that the poor could get hurt, promising that those in genuine need would always get help and support. He is wary of provoking another rebellion such as the one over single-parent benefits and he told backbenchers yesterday that he would consult widely before making changes.

In his *Times* article, Mr Blair says that he will build a "new architecture" for the welfare state based on the principle that people have a responsibility to provide for themselves if they can and that anyone who can work should do so.

He accepts that many of his changes will take a long time, but says: "If the rewards come in the next century with the

welfare state put on a sound modern footing for future generations then it will have been worth the controversy."

Gordon Brown, the Chancellor, delivers the same message today. Interviewed in the *New Statesman*, he says: "The welfare state is not working for millions. Tinkering is not the answer to this. Fundamental reform is the answer."

As part of the campaign the Government will today publish the first in a series of "focus files" designed to highlight the failings of the present system. They show that while in 1949, the first full year of the modern welfare state, 13.5p in every pound spent by the Government went on social security benefits; by 1971 the figure was 18p and today it is 30p.

Ann Ashworth, page 8
Tony Blair, page 18

Doubt over bitten ear

The ear injury sustained by London Scottish rugby flanker, Simon Fenn, in the match against Bath might not have been caused by a bite. Philip Bliss, the Bath honorary surgeon, said that from discussions he had had with the doctor who treated Fenn, he understood that "there was no evidence that it was a bite".
Letters, page 19

Policeman shot

A Belfast police officer was critically ill last night after being shot by a woman soldier during an undercover operation that went wrong. The plain-clothes soldier was working alone in an unmarked car.
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Venables ban

Terry Venables agreed to a High Court order banning him from holding directorships for seven years. The former England soccer coach admitted misconduct.
Page 23

Woman of 54 has baby 35 years after her first

By SIMON DE BRUXELLES

AT the age of 54, Elizabeth Buttle was sure her symptoms were the first signs of the menopause. She could not have been more wrong.

Mrs Buttle, a Welsh farmer, has become a mother for the second time, 35 years after having her first child, making her the second-oldest woman to give birth in Britain without using fertility drugs.

The unexpected arrival of Joseph David Buttle means the eldest of her three grandchildren has an uncle nearly 20 years younger than himself. "Yesterday Mrs Buttle held her baby and said: 'He's my little miracle. He makes me feel like a young woman again.'"

Mrs Burde, who had a daughter in 1962, was widowed more than ten years ago and found love again with Peter Royston, 56. She little expected to find herself with a

new family. The couple live on her goat farm in the village of Cwmam, near Lampeter, west Wales.

As a result of Mrs Buttle's age, Joseph was at a higher than usual risk of Down's syndrome but scans and blood tests showed he was normal.

She said: "It must be the clean country air. I feel perfectly well and I don't know what all the fuss is about. I've heard one or two critical comments in the village about me having a baby at my age. It wasn't planned. But we didn't do anything to stop it happening. It's nature's way."

Joseph was born by Caesarean section at West Wales General Hospital in Carmarthen on November 20, slightly premature.

Mr Royston, a lorry driver, decorated a nursery at the farm for the arrival. Mrs Buttle was back at work on the

farm within two weeks of giving birth.

John Power, the hospital's chief executive, said: "Because of Mrs Buttle's age and the uniqueness of her pregnancy, she was given special care and attention by the midwives. We are all delighted that the baby was born healthy and has continued to do well."

She is believed to be second-oldest woman in Britain to have a baby without fertility treatment, but has the biggest gap between her first two children.

According to the *Guinness Book of Records*, Britain's oldest mother was Kathleen Campbell, of Ilkeston, Derbyshire, who had a baby at the age of 55 in 1987. The oldest mother on record is Rosanna Dalia Corta, a 63-year-old Italian, who gave birth to a son in 1994 after an egg implant.

not

Sanity takes a back seat for Kafka question time

Let us hope Prime Minister's Questions does not continue through 1998 in the tawdry way it began yesterday. Tony Blair treated the Commons with a jocular disregard, his own side proved unable to think of a serious question: the Liberal Democrats gibbered like small herbivores in the presence of a snake; and the Tory Party entered the new year as it departed the old one: dysfunctional.

The Prime Minister has now dropped every pretence of giving answers. Anything awkward he just ignores. This is so successful it is surprising

nobody has tried it before. His reply makes no logical link with the inquiry which prompted it: a sort of Dadaesque dialogue reminiscent of the Theatre of the Absurd.

For William Hague this was infuriating. Despite the rabble on the Tory benches around him, the Conservative Leader remains lucid. He repeated what should have been a devastating quote from one Social Security minister (Frank Field) directly contradicting another (Harriet Harman). Mr Field had said means-testing would penalise work, tax savings and place a premium on



MATTHEW PARRIS
POLITICAL SKETCH

dishonesty". His boss had said she planned to extend it. How would Tony Blair answer? Simple. He just told Mr Hague it was important to reform the welfare system. Hague tried drawing Blair back to the quote itself, then gave up and said the Tories might support welfare reform if the Government would explain what they were doing and why.

Mr Blair said that there would have been no need for reform if the Tories had not left a mess. Mr Hague then observed that the blue of a butterfly's wings was quite extraordinarily intense in early summer.

Well, no: actually he did not; but few eyebrows would have been raised. There was a surreal sense that we were all incarcerated in some sort of Kafka madhouse.

In a lunatic asylum the same

men sound nutty. A wry question from Stephen Pound (Lab, Ealing N) remarking that his 50th birthday coincided with the 50th birthday of the NHS — and inviting the Prime Minister to comment on at least one of these events — and a brave question from the resigned minister Malcolm Chisholm criticising his own Government's welfare cuts, struck odd notes among the sycophantic chatter.

A couple of idiotic Tories (too dim to understand that the one thing which could still sink Robin Cook would be a public nudge and wink from sympathetic Tory chaps) tried

to censure the Foreign Secretary's sexual adventuring. The Prime Minister could have ignored these tilts. Instead he snarped at John Berrow (C, Buckingham) that he reminded him of a former MP, David Shaw "whose hallmark was to be nasty and ineffectual in equal quantity".

Like St Paul, Mr Blair is prey to those sudden rushes of venom which choke the personally virtuous. He lashes out. Sometimes he draws blood. But does it benefit a Prime Minister? Just before Christmas he made a sneering comparison between the Liberal Democrats' mid-

mannered Treasury Spokesman, Malcolm Bruce, and Tinky Winky. Everybody laughed, but...

A year ago he called John Major "knee-deep in dishonour". Major winced, but...

This sketch remembers when nice, bumbling Robert Adley MP (not long, as it turned out, for this world) asked Neil Kinnock whether there was anything he had not changed his mind about, and Mr Kinnock said Yes, he had formed the opinion early that Adley was a jerk, and stuck to it. The remark seemed clever, for half an hour.

NEWS IN BRIEF

Japanese firms yet to pledge Dome cash

Japanese corporations said yesterday that Tony Blair and aides had "jumped the gun" in claiming they were pledging millions in sponsorship to the Millennium Dome. Leading companies such as Nissan and Sony insisted they had not been approached. Others, such as Toyota, said that businessmen accompanying the Prime Minister had discussed the Dome but the car giant had not promised to give the £12 million maximum donation allowed.

One executive said: "We don't want to embarrass the Prime Minister because it could be that Japanese corporations do invest heavily in Greenwich, but nothing has been agreed yet."

Chief resigns

Roger Ward, chief executive of the Association of Colleges, has resigned after admitting he gave several incorrect answers to MPs' questions a month ago. The association has launched an inquiry over claims he received unauthorised fees.

X-ray recall

A thousand women out of 16,000 who underwent breast screening in Humberdale during a 12-month period are being recalled. Inspectors found that their X-rays were not of a high enough quality to assure radiologists that they were clear of cancer.

NHS morale

Morale in the National Health Service, according to a survey of 3,300 staff by the public service union Unison, is plummeting. Many workers who leave are not replaced while sickness levels force others to work many hours of unpaid overtime.

Hunting report

Hunting with hounds does not help to control foxes, a report claimed yesterday. Stephen Harris and Phil Baker of the School of Biological Sciences at Bristol University also said a hunting ban would not lead to crueler ways of killing foxes.

Youth's team

Martin Schwillens, 18, a Dutchman from Arnhem, has become the youngest director in the Football League, joining the board of Third Division Scarborough as commercial director after inheriting money from his uncle.

Pitbull attack

A woman underwent hours of surgery yesterday after being savaged by her pet pitbull terrier following a family funeral. The dog attacked Anne Marie McGroarty, 29, and two others during a wake at a house in Glasgow on Tuesday night.

Party head pays

A headteacher is to pay £1,000 towards the £1,500 cost of the staff Christmas party. Governors at Reay Primary School in Brixton, southeast London, told Peter Charan they would pay only £500. The deputy head had resigned in protest at the cost.

Opera go-ahead

Leonard Ingrams, a merchant banker, won permission from magistrates in Thame, Oxfordshire, to continue staging open-air opera festivals at Garsington Manor, despite protests from neighbours about the noise. He was also awarded costs.

Thousands mourn loss of youth worker

BY MARTIN FLETCHER

WEST Belfast yesterday witnessed one of its biggest funerals since that of the IRA hunger striker Bobby Sands in 1981 but this time Protestants joined Catholics in their grief. Gerry Adams and Martin McGuinness were among nearly 5,000 mourners who followed Terry Enright's coffin through the staunchly republican Turf Lodge estate. It was a ritual they had performed countless times during the past quarter-century of conflict. But this time they were paying homage not to another IRA "volunteer" who had been "killed in action" but to an inspiring young man who had spent his life weening vulnerable teenagers away from violence.

Mr Enright, 28, was married to Mr Adams's niece, Dierdra, and had two infant daughters. He was a widely admired youth and community worker who took young Catholics and Protestants camping, climbing and canoeing.

Since the autumn he had worked as a Saturday night doorman at the Space club in central Belfast to earn some extra cash. Just after midnight on Sunday a red Sierra drew up as he was chatting to two colleagues. Two gunmen, members of the Loyalist Volunteer Force, then opened fire and killed him.



Women of 14 Intelligence Company carry MP5K sub-machineguns when in Belfast

RUC man shot by undercover woman soldier

BY MARTIN FLETCHER AND MICHEL EVANS

A BELFAST police officer was critically ill in hospital last night after being shot by a woman soldier during an undercover operation that went tragically wrong in the small hours of yesterday morning.

The plain-clothes soldier, believed to be a member of the Army's surveillance unit, was working alone in an unmarked car in an area of North Belfast where the security forces have intensified their activities since the recent spate of loyalist gun attacks on Catholic targets.

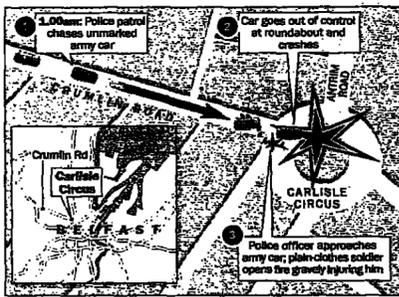
Shortly after lam a police patrol of at least three armed policemen spotted her acting suspiciously. They chased her at high speed down Crumlin Road, apparently believing she was a joyrider. She lost control at the Carlisle Circus roundabout and crashed at 1.23 am. Other police cars arrived at the scene. As one of the police officers approached she opened fire, hitting him in the chest. The officer's armoured police car was unmarked but the officer was in uniform.

There is speculation that the soldier believed she was being pursued by would-be attackers and opened fire in what she perceived to be self-defence. The police say that no shots were fired by any of the officers.

The Royal Ulster Constabulary was unable to say whether the police patrol had used its siren or flashing lights. The soldier was being questioned by the police yesterday and could face charges.

A senior detective was appointed to head an inquiry into what the RUC labelled an "unfortunate accident". Bill Stewart, the RUC's assistant chief constable, said there were strict guidelines designed to prevent such mix-ups between the police and military and promised a thorough examination.

"No one can fully appreciate the feelings of both police and military colleagues," he said.



"Considering the circumstances in Northern Ireland and the risks involved in protecting the public from terrorism, incidents of this kind have thankfully been few and far between."

Alex Maskey, a Sinn Fein councillor who has survived several loyalist assassination attempts, called the circumstances "sinister" and demanded a government explanation. "This incident is a further source of concern to nationalists already living on a knife-edge. Many people will be extremely suspicious of such activities," he said.

If the soldier was on an authorised operation in north Belfast, police in the area should have known. A Tasking and Co-ordination Group comprising representatives of the police, military and security services is supposed to manage and coordinate all undercover operations in order to avoid incidents of this sort.

Soldiers and police have been killed by "friendly fire" but there have been few incidents like this one.

The shooting highlights the extraordinary role played by women in one of the most dangerous undercover missions in Northern Ireland.

The unnamed woman soldier is part of a secret unit called 14 Intelligence Company which targets known terrorist "players". Apart from the SAS, 14 Intelligence Company is one of the most secret

army units in Ulster. Women have traditionally played an important role with the surveillance unit because of the paramount importance of having an undercover team that can blend in with the environment, whether republican or loyalist. The key objective is to mount surveillance on suspected terrorists without looking obvious. The female element adds that touch of normality.

Women in the Army are not allowed a combat role and can use their weapons only in self-defence. Although the women of 14 Intelligence Company would also only expect to fire in self-defence, their role is as close to combat as any other unit in the Army because, over the years, they have been exposed to so many potentially life-threatening confrontations. One Army source said: "These women are incredibly brave."

The unit was set up in 1974 when the Army in Northern Ireland decided it needed its own special undercover surveillance unit instead of relying solely on the RUC Special Branch, which at that time did not have the capability to provide the type of intelligence required by the Army.

It was formed after the relatively unsuccessful "Mobile Reconnaissance Force", a group of plain-clothes soldiers formed by Brigadier Frank Kison, the counter-insurgency expert, was disbanded in 1973.

run by the IRA in January, 1996, was "the start of a trail which led to the arrest of McKinley and the fingerprint linked to McCordle".

He said the bomb at South Quay was concealed inside a flatbed truck which, three weeks earlier, was taken to Stranraer from Belfast so that when it made its final journey, it would not arouse suspicion.

Dummy run 'led to accused'

BY STEWART TENDLER CRIME CORRESPONDENT

TWO men accused of being involved in the London Docklands bomb attack were linked to a dummy run carried out by the IRA weeks before the attack, an Old Bailey jury was told yesterday.

James McCordle, 30, from Crossmaglen, Co Armagh,

and Patrick McKinley, 34, from Mullaghban, near Newry, Co Down, have denied conspiracy to cause an explosion. Mr McCordle has also denied the murder of two men killed by the lorry bomb at South Quay on February 9, 1996.

Yesterday, John Bevan, QC, continuing his opening for the prosecution, said a practice

run by the IRA in January, 1996, was "the start of a trail which led to the arrest of McKinley and the fingerprint linked to McCordle".

He said the bomb at South Quay was concealed inside a flatbed truck which, three weeks earlier, was taken to Stranraer from Belfast so that when it made its final journey, it would not arouse suspicion.

Brown biography 'not authorised'

BY JILL SHERMAN, CHIEF POLITICAL CORRESPONDENT

GORDON BROWN has vigorously denied authorising the controversial biography which suggests that Tony Blair broke a pact during the Labour leadership election.

Commenting for the first time about the book, the Chancellor says in a *New Statesman* interview: "I don't have a copy, I haven't read it. I haven't authorised it."

He admits that he gave Paul Routledge, the author, an interview on the way to Headrow but denies that he spoke about the events surrounding the 1994 leadership election. "I think it is quite wrong to say this is me trying to do certain things. The friendship between Tony Blair and me has been very

strong over the years and has to withstand all sorts of press speculation."

Asked if he still wanted to be Labour leader in the future he said: "That's a matter for the Labour Party. I've got a lot to do here."

The interview, published today but conducted earlier this week, fails to mention the role of Nick Brown, the Chief Whip, whom Mr Routledge claims was responsible for briefing him on the leadership election and the fact that Mr Blair had resigned on a pact not to stand against Mr Brown. A spokesman for the Prime Minister said Mr Blair had no plans to speak to the Chancellor about the book.

MPs back Hague

Continued from page 1

Yesterday's ballot just 24 MPs voted to leave the present system of electing leaders by MPs unchanged.

Twenty-three voted in favour of a system involving an electoral college with members and MPs. But 102 voted for the new system of an MPs primary followed by an one-man-one-vote decision. The MPs will decide next week whether the membership should be invited to select from a list of two, three or four candidates. A big majority also voted in favour of ending annual elections and instead holding votes of confidence to remove an existing leader.

Mr Hague promised to continue the pace of reforms, promising that like Labour he wanted all party members to be involved in the choice of candidates for Westminster, the European Parliament and Mayor of London. He also

promised membership votes on big policy matters, including British membership of the single currency.

He said: "We are introducing real democracy into our party. Unlike the Labour party, where trade union barons have the same share of the vote in leadership elections as the entire party membership, we are giving our members the final say on the principal policies and leadership."

Sir Archie Hamilton, chairman of the 1922 committee, said: "It is very much in tune with the democracy which has been introduced to the party as a whole."

One opponent of the changes, Bill Cash, said: "I obviously accept the result but I see difficulties ahead because it is possible that in the future there could be a divergence of opinion between the parliamentary party and the members outside."

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Boars on run keep wellwishers at bay

Simon de Bruxelles stakes out the Tamworth Two, whose plucky escape has inspired a campaign for them to be spared

A FLASH of ginger chops and he was gone, back into the bramble and blackthorn thicket. But it was enough to confirm that the Tamworth Two were still at large yesterday, six days after their great escape from the butcher's knife.

The sighting of the two little pigs by slaughterman Jeremy Newman was the first since Monday. "You can't be sentimental in this business, but I say good luck to them," he said yesterday. "I reckon they've got more sense than we have, they showed a lot of initiative when they escaped. As soon as he caught sight of me he made off as fast as his legs could carry him."

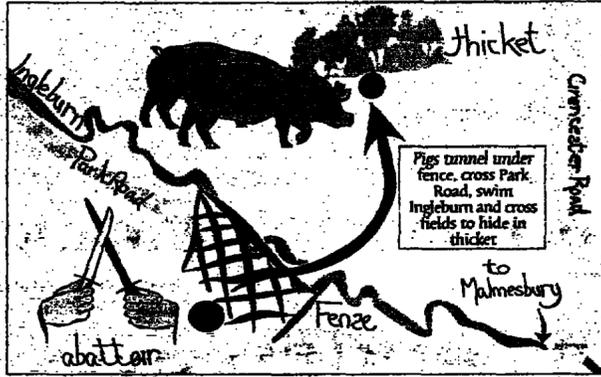
After their escape, which involved burrowing under a fence and swimming a river, the two ginger-haired Tamworth boars have won massive public sympathy. A campaign to save them from slaughter has begun with dozens of well-wishers offering them homes and attempting to buy their freedom. Mr Newman, 35, whose grandfather started in the abattoir 50 years ago, said: "I just couldn't believe the reaction. I have had calls from people all over the country, including one from a girl's boarding school in London that wants them. Unfortunately they are not mine or they would be welcome to have them."

Patricia Hodson of the Born Free Foundation in Dorking, Surrey, which rescues wild animals, said: "They are beautiful animals and we would like to give them a good home. They should be given another chance after being clever enough to run away."

Their rightful owner, Arnold Djalilo, a council road sweeper, has refused all offers.

The boars, each weighing almost 8st, are staked out in a notoriously impenetrable 10ft high thicket covering about half an acre off Tetbury Hill, on the outskirts of Malmesbury. There they have found an old apple tree with a plentiful supply of fallen fruit and have been digging around for roots, worms and other juicy morsels. It also affords an excellent vantage point to spot anyone coming to catch them.

The thicket is owned by Cad Sadler, one of the country's last traditional muddle



THE ESCAPE COMMITTEE



The Tamworth is one of the oldest breeds of pig and considered by animal behaviourists to be one of the most intelligent. They are hardy and resourceful, having an instinct for recognising and avoiding danger. Their ginger colouring provides an excellent camouflage in woods. With its long body and legs, it can move faster than other breeds and evade at quick intervals. Newman Tamworths develop

quickly and become independent at a faster rate than other pigs. In its heyday at the turn of the century, the Tamworth was prized for its rich and aromatic bacon. But when modern science developed other breeds that were cheaper to raise and yielded more bacon, the Tamworth faded into obscurity. Today it is considered a fairly rare breed. They may be kept as pets but only if they are tamed from birth.

makers. "I'd rather said: 'They are welcome to stay here as long as they want. It's the perfect place for pigs and I'd be happy for them to root out some of this undergrowth.' Local residents have nick-

named them 'Fido' and 'Ginger' because they had to have performed some pretty fancy footwork to have escaped the butcher's knife," Joan Richardson, an English literature professor, said. Unfortunately they are un-

likely to be left at liberty for too long. Roy Waine, who owns the neighbouring field, looked in horror at the holes caused by snuffling porcine noses. "They can't just be left to go round causing damage like this," he said. "I suppose they will have to be shot if they can't be caught alive. It may sound cruel but in my view it's far better than letting them starve to death. Once the apples have run out they are going to get very hungry if the ground freezes again. The weather might be mild today but we are still in the middle of winter."

In the Tamworth Two's best interests *The Times* joined the big game hunt. The beasts were lying low, having been startled by television reporters tramping around in shiny new wellingtons, and an ITN helicopter hovering overhead for half an hour. I knew I was on the right track when I found fresh trotter spoor around their watering hole, an old cattle trough. From there the trail led back through a gap in the fence and disappeared into the undergrowth.

Equipped with a stout stick and a sack of potatoes I ventured into the depths of the thicket. "Thorns pierced my not entirely adequate clothing and brambles caught my hair as we stalked our quarry, entirely unsuspecting what to do if we found it."

Mr Newman had given us some advice. "If you grab hold of a pig by its ears you can sort of drag it along," he said. Then he spoilt things by adding: "Mind you, the trou-



The big game hunter: Simon de Bruxelles, armed with a stout stick and his bait of King Edward potatoes

ble with Tamworths is that they're not like ordinary pigs and they can bite, so I wouldn't try it myself."

Bribery seemed to be the only answer. Stumbling across a likely looking clearing I set my bait, a trail of

King Edward's leading back to the open door of my car. We then retreated. As we waited locals reminisced about local porcine celebrities, including the pig that ate the wedding cake, and the one that snatched a £5 note

from its owner's hand. The latter was delivered to Newman's slaughterhouse with the message: "Your fee is in the pig."

Unfortunately newspaper deadlines wait for neither man nor beast and the fleet-

footed porkers could by their have been a mile away. So we consoled ourselves with the thought that if they get bored of apples, the potatoes will make a pleasant change.

Leading article, page 19



The fugitives' trail: after running out of Newman's abattoir, they swam for their lives at this point and made for Tetbury Hill, where they were spotted in a copse by Harry Clarke. They are now thought to be in a thicket

not

Michael Hornsby on the £100m price of food safety

New agency that will monitor all we eat

THE proposed new food standards agency unveiled yesterday by Jack Cunningham, the Minister of Agriculture, will be an independent body with the power to monitor the safety of what we eat from plough to plate.

Dr Cunningham said that most of the costs of running the new body would have to be borne by the food industry and admitted that this was likely to mean higher shop prices. "If we want better and safer food standards, then we will have to pay for it," Dr Cunningham said.

The 81-page document estimates that annual expenditure on the agency, which is not expected to be in operation before the middle of next year, will be in excess of £100 million.

Up to £35 million of this could come from existing levies on the food industry, the paper says, but suggests that a further £60 million could be raised by a flat-rate licensing fee of £100 charged on all the 600,000 registered food premises in Britain.

Dr Cunningham said this was one of various possible financing mechanisms that would be examined during the two months of consultation on the White Paper with all interested parties. The paper says that the Government is considering "passing on the

MAIN POINTS

- The Food Standards Agency will be independent and be headed by a commission of up to 12 members from a wide range of interests.
- Have a back-up staff of several hundred, drawn from the Ministry of Agriculture and Department of Health.
- Be responsible for the whole of the UK, with separate executives for Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland.
- Cost in excess of £100 million a year, most of which will be borne by a charge on the food industry.
- Have a research budget of about £25 million a year.
- Have the power to supervise enforcement of food safety from plough to plate.
- Have the final say on advice given to ministers about safety of pesticides and veterinary medicines.
- Be responsible for licensing all abattoirs.
- Draft legislation on the labelling of food.
- Share with the Department of Health the task of advising the public on a healthy diet.

greater part of the costs of food safety work directly to the food industry, recognising that over time the bulk of these costs are likely to be passed on to the consumer."

The agency will be a single body covering the whole of the United Kingdom, with an independent chairman heading a commission of at least 12 members, representing "a reasonable balance of skills and experience", with a majority drawn "from a wider public-interest background without specific affiliation". The members will include consumer representatives.

The commission will also

have members representing the special interests of Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland. There will be separate executives, answering to a British chief executive.

When established, the agency will be accountable principally to the Health Secretary, Frank Dobson, and will take over virtually all the food safety responsibilities now exercised by the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food.

Dr Cunningham said he believed the existence of the agency would make it possible to establish a better balance than in the past between the

interests of food producers and food consumers.

However, many of the staff of the agency will come from the Ministry of Agriculture. Dr Cunningham said the agency would have a total staff of "several hundred". They would be civil servants, with 90 per cent being drawn from the existing personnel of the Ministry of Agriculture, and the remainder coming from the Department of Health.

The agency will provide policy advice to ministers, will help in the preparation of legislation and will also supply technical advisers to assist ministers during European Union and other international negotiations.

Two important bodies, the Veterinary Medicines Directorate and the Pesticides Safety Directorate, will remain attached to the Ministry of Agriculture.

The agency will be able to commission its own research, and will have a research budget of around £25 million a year. It will assume responsibility for assessing the safety of new foods, including those that have been genetically modified, and will share supervision of the work of Seac, the committee that advises the Government on "Mad Cow" disease, with the Department of Health and the Ministry of Agriculture.



Jack Cunningham, the Agriculture Minister, launching a meat industry scheme yesterday to raise consumer confidence. Assured British Meat will impose standards on feed manufacturers, abattoirs, farms and retailers

Nutritionist's winning recipe

BY NIGEL HAWKES, SCIENCE EDITOR

THE blueprint for the Food Standards Agency is a triumph for Professor Philip James, who drafted the original plan and has seen off objections from the food industry, scientists and at least one cabinet minister.

It is also a red-letter day for the National Food Alliance, an umbrella body of health and consumer advocates chaired by Professor James since 1990. The NEA campaigns for changes in the way food is produced and distributed, in order, as it says, "to improve the health of the general public."

Though little known to the public, Professor James is a powerful figure in the world of human nutrition, where egos clash as regularly as

rival theories on healthy eating. Yet for the past 15 years his job has been to run the Rowett Research Institute, an animal research centre in Aberdeen.

Rivals say he was frustrated not to be put in charge of a leading human nutrition centre and has been patiently building a power-base ever since. When Tony Blair, as Leader of the Opposition, asked him to prepare the outline of Labour's food safety agency, Professor James required no second bidding.

With skill and speed he produced his outline, which put nutrition high on the agenda. Other scientists and the Royal Society advised that food safety, not nutritional advice, was the most



James: powerful figure

urgent need. Peter Mandelson, Minister without Portfolio, agreed.

That advice was swept aside. The new agency will have responsibility for the safety of food and its nutritional value. The danger, the

food industry says, is that the tail will wag the dog and the agency will devote itself to well-meant advice to the public while food poisoning cases continue to rise.

Much will depend upon whether a microbiologist or a nutritionist ultimately takes the agency's helm. Professor James is approaching 60, retirement age for government service, so may see the ultimate prize slip from his grasp. But it would be unwise to count him out.

Recently he stopped a government report as the printers were preparing to run it off. The report, by the committee on medical aspects of food policy, did not take a strong enough line on the alleged risks of eating red meat to satisfy Professor James.

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Truckers fear death of the greasy spoon

Damian Whitworth reports on refuelling problems

THERE is a crisis facing the British lorry driver which becomes apparent only when you see him eat. The number of greasy spoon cafes serving the great warrior of the road has dwindled drastically, but his appetite has not.

Lorry drivers need to be refuelled more frequently than their vehicles, and with similar industrial quantities. While their articulated giants are pumped with 100 gallons of diesel, they are filled with enough carbohydrate to power a small town.

One of the remaining fulcrums of such activity is the BP truck stop just off the A180 at Ulechy, a few miles outside Grimsby. Yesterday the road was full of lorries ploughing towards the frozen food factories of Grimsby and the container port at Immingham.

Heavy vehicles were lined up in the lorry park. Inside the cafe a team of ladies bustled in the kitchens while large human beings waited for their cholesterol top-ups. Somewhere in the region of 17 spaces of Tom Mitchell stretched in his chair. He lit a post-prandial cigarette as a pile of oral dust gathered round his feet and explained the problem with Little Chef's taking over the world, where big drivers go to.

"We're not allowed to sit with the general public. Two transport cabs on the A1 link road have just closed. There are two Little Chefs but we aren't allowed to use them. If you park up down the road and go down there and they know you're a lorry driver, they won't serve you. A colleague of mine was told to go away. They wouldn't serve him a Marx bar."

"We wouldn't pay their prices anyway," Pat Williams added. "You used to be able to go into a transport cafe and sit in a different section and get the same food as the general public for half price. Not now. We all face the same prices."

So the lorry drivers are confined to their own truck stops where they pay around

£5 to park up and sleep in their cabs and then get £2 off their breakfast.

"Our company pays for our parking so that means we can get breakfast for £1.95, which isn't bad," Mr Mitchell said.

"It's something to keep you going. I'll have another burger and chips later. And you can get as all day, so you get your money's worth."

It is certainly value for money. The all-day breakfast at £3.95 consists of sausage (large), bacon, eggs (two), beans, tomatoes, black pudding, fried bread, fried potatoes and two rounds of toast. For 70p a bottomless mug of tea will be filled all day. Equally popular is the mixed grill which features gammon, steak, a burger, sausage, egg, onion rings, chips and beans for £4.65 before the discount. Up the road at a Little Chef, a less substantial meal is £4.99.

Of all the greasy spoons on the lorry routes across the land, the BF's were rated by Mr Mitchell and Mr Williams as the best. Not all cafes serve such good nosh, however. Take Sheepshead. "The food's not as nice. They do vegetables and that sort of stuff," Mr Williams said.

Apprehensive about the time, Mr Mitchell and Mr Williams, who live in Portsmouth but work across the country for

area to be signposted on the motorway, currently forbidden unless there is no motorway service area within easy range.

Damian Whitworth is the Road Management Association, which has 100,000 drivers on its books said: "With the honourable exception of chains like BP, facilities for hauliers are becoming the exception rather than the rule and drivers are having to drive ever greater distances to find stops that cater for their needs."

Mr Hughes left Ulechy yesterday afternoon to collect some clay for delivery to Kidderminster. There was nothing for it but to follow their example and order up the all-day breakfast. Surprisingly tasty it was, too. It forgotten how good white toast and catering margarine can be. To those not wholly concerned about their hearts, recommend it whole heartedly.

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the battle of the sexes has just begun.



Jan 30

مكتبة النور

Victorious Basseyy sings judge's praises

Kathryn Knight on the stress endured by singer who was accused of hitting her assistant in a drunken rage

SHIRLEY BASSEY branded her former personal assistant vindictive yesterday after a judge rejected her claim that she had been slapped and called "a Jewish bitch".

Miss Bassey, 62, hugged and kissed her barrister and wept with relief after Judge Marcus Edwards said he was convinced by her "straightforward and unshaken" evidence that she had not dismissed Hilary Levy in a drunken rage.

Afterwards, as she undertook an impromptu walk-about for fans outside Brentford County Court, Miss Bassey said Miss Levy's claims that she had been sacked for asking for a few hours off were the accusations of a vindictive woman who had walked out of a good job.

In a statement, she said the three-year wait for the court case had caused her great stress. "It has been a matter of considerable distress to me that someone with whom I had enjoyed a close working relationship should have taken this action. I am grateful that Judge Edwards has supported me and found that the allegations and claims which have been made against me are entirely unjustified and have no basis in fact."

She added that she had contested the case as a matter of principle. "I have fought the case regardless of cost in order to defend my name and reputation, in order to protect my career."

Asked why she thought Miss Levy had brought the case, she said: "It was vindictive. She had a very good job with me and she walked out on me and said I had sacked her, which wasn't true."

Miss Levy, 44, who left the court in tears, was ordered to pay both her own and the singer's costs and now faces a bill in excess of £50,000. She



Hilary Levy: faces bill of more than £50,000

had sought £7,650 damages for breach of contract from Miss Bassey and management company FFM, claiming the singer had told her "You're out tomorrow" during a heated argument after a party while they were on a South African concert tour.

However, Judge Edwards said yesterday that he found her account of the events of December 10 1993 implausible. He said he preferred the evidence of Miss Bassey, who had agreed that there had been a confrontation during which she had pushed Miss Levy and called her "a spoiled Jewish princess", but denied any further contact.

"I found Miss Bassey to be a straightforward witness who made appropriate concessions at appropriate moments and did not seek to overstate her case," Judge Edwards said. "She was unshaken in her evidence about the crucial argument and pointed out how unwise it would be for her to sack her PA in the middle of a tour." By contrast, Judge

Edwards said he found Miss Levy to be a less persuasive witness. "Generally I find her not to be as fully frank and helpful as she might be."

He was particularly unconvinced by Miss Levy's statement that she had a "clear image" of being slapped on her right shoulder particularly as in a previous statement she had claimed to have been hit on the left.

He said it was unlikely, if she had been dismissed by Miss Bassey, that the star's manager, Beat Mills, would have attempted to make her stay the next day — evidence which was undisputed.

Details of the relationship between the two former friends had emerged during the two-day hearing. Miss Levy had worked periodically for Miss Bassey since 1979, accompanying her on concert tours around the world. She packed her clothes, typed letters to fans and other correspondence and liaised with hotels and other members of her entourage about Miss Bassey's requirements. The two had become friends during their lengthy professional relationship, but the relationship had soured towards the end of 1993.

Judge Edwards said he felt Miss Levy had become dissatisfied with her work, particularly with her pay and duties. The judge said she had been irritated to find that she was expected to arrive early and buy Christmas presents for the singer after going to bed at 4am.

"I find the plaintiff had become increasingly disenchanted with her employer... the last straw for her was going to bed very late and then being expected to get up and run an errand for Miss Bassey, having had very little sleep and before waking her at 12 to 12.30."



Shirley Bassey emerges triumphant from court yesterday. She said the case had caused her considerable distress

NEWS IN BRIEF

Officer caught on film faces hearing

A police officer who was caught on camera allegedly using unnecessary force during an arrest is to face a disciplinary hearing, the Police Complaints Authority has said. The allegations involve a Thames Valley Police officer during the arrest in Maidenhead, Berkshire, in November 1996 of a suspect for failing to provide a breath specimen.

Police arrested

Two Liverpool policemen have been arrested in an internal police investigation into pornography. The uniformed inspector and a detective sergeant, both suspended, were questioned yesterday at separate stations in the city.

Pub stabbing

A man has appeared before magistrates charged with murdering Rachel Long, 20, who died after being stabbed at a pub in Grove, Oxfordshire. Matthew Smith, 29, of Abingdon, was also accused of attempted murder.

Singer missing

A warrant has been issued for the arrest of Mark Morrison, the rap star, after he failed to appear at Marylebone Magistrates' Court on a charge of possessing an offensive weapon. He was expected to plead not guilty.

Getty honour

John Paul Getty is to have his honorary knighthood converted to a full honour following his adoption of British citizenship. He will be invited to Buckingham Palace to receive the accolade. He was appointed an honorary knight in 1986.

Ham ruling

The High Court has reserved judgment on an attempt by Italy's Parma ham producers to ban Asda Stores from selling meat sliced and packaged in Britain, rather than in Parma. Judgment is expected next week.

Timely arrivals

Two sisters gave birth at exactly the same time at Darlington Memorial Hospital. Tracy Harrison, 27, had James, weighing 7lb 3oz, as Vicky, 19, produced Chloe, 6lb 12oz. Now they plan a synchronised christening.

Routed Irish men dig in for last battle of the sexes

By Audrey Magee
IRELAND CORRESPONDENT

FEMINISM is facing a new battle in Ireland where male politicians and community workers are joining forces to demand a full inquiry into the status of men.

Men who comprise just under half of the 3.6 million population, complain that they have been pushed aside by women's new power to earn money and support families. The recent election of a second woman president has added to their sense of inadequacy.

Brian Hayes, a Fine Gael opposition MP, will next week demand that the Government sets up a Commission on the

PAINFUL LESSONS FOR THE BOYS

In Britain, Stephen Byers, the education minister, called last week for ways of bringing the educational achievements of boys up to those of girls, with more male teachers as positive role models. More than 28,500 boys leave school every year with no qualifications. Among grown-ups, suicide is three times

Status of Men, similar to the two established in the 70s and 80s to analyse the inequality meted out to Irish women. This is not an anti-women campaign. I fully endorse and

as common in men as it is in women, sperm counts are falling and more than three times as many men as women are unemployed. Work and claiming unemployment benefits. Women now hold 44 per cent of all jobs although women still have less than 5 per cent of the seats in British boardrooms.

support their role in Irish society, but men are suffering," said Mr Hayes.

"Men are facing problems in society which they have never had to tackle before. There is a

prevailing sense of loss of identity and purpose. This is leading to crime and suicide among young men at rates we have never seen before."

Mr Hayes, 28, wants the Government to investigate the effects of long-term unemployment on men's self-esteem and family life, and to devise ways of getting men to discuss their problems. His plan is welcomed by the Men's Network, which represents 80 men's groups, most of them based in areas of high unemployment.

"The isolation felt by men arriving on our doorstep is incredible," said Felix Gallagher, spokesman for the Network, based in Dublin.

"They are working-class, semi-skilled or unskilled who

have no chance of getting a job despite the 'Celtic Tiger' economy. They either spend all day in the pub if they can afford to or in the house, ashamed to come out. Marriages regularly break up because they are no longer the breadwinners and have no real role in life."

The men want more control over family life, particularly when marriages break up — women win about 90 per cent of custody battles. They want more counselling, because the rate of suicide among men under 25 has quadrupled since 1990, rendering it a more common cause of death for young men than accidents or disease.

Unemployment, while falling dramatically for women,



Brian Hayes: men have lost identity

remains static for men in poorer areas. Men make up most of the 11.6 per cent unemployed but only about 10

per cent of the attendance at back-to-work schemes.

John Waters, an Irish Times columnist who has been advocating men's rights since fathering his daughter, said: "I wish the singer had O'Connor, said this week: 'Whereas our culture goes out of its way to self young women on the verge of adulthood that they are by nature sensitive, caring, humane and compassionate, it tells its male young that they will grow up to be insensitive brutes, unworthy of respect.' Women's groups have been listening politely, then scolding quietly. "A lot of women think it's a load of cobblers," said one women's activist. "Let them go to hell with their whingeing and groaning."

not



Robinson: chairman

Robinson takes on arts post

GERRY ROBINSON, the head of the Granada Group, accepted the chairmanship of the Arts Council yesterday. He will take over from Earl Gowrie, who leaves at the end of April.

Mr Robinson, 49, is chairman of BSkyB and Granada, the hotel, leisure and television company. He is a donor to the Labour Party, and was the favourite for the post. His appointment, which is unpaid, will run until January 2001.

Opera denies conflict over EMI chairman

Dalya Alberge gauges reaction to Covent Garden appointment

THE chairman of EMI Records, Sir Colin Southgate, will today be confirmed as the new chairman of the Royal Opera House.

Yesterday, a spokeswoman for the ROH dismissed the suggestion that there could be any conflict of interest in the appointment, even though EMI exclusively represents the conductors Bernard Haitink, Mariss Jansons and Sir Simon Rattle, and the singers Roberto Alagna, Thomas Hampson and Amanda Roocroft.

One observer said: "Does this mean Alagna will now have special treatment at Covent Garden? He's had a love-hate relationship with them. Will there be recording deals with EMI?" John Allison, music critic of *The Times*, said: "People will watch with a beady eye. There is a potential conflict."

However, others felt that there was not the slightest possibility of a conflict of interests. The agent Martin



Current EMI CDs feature singers such as Robert Hampson, Amanda Roocroft and Roberto Alagna

Campbell-White, of Harold Holt, dismissed the suggestion, pointing out that EMI's classics division accounts for only a tiny percentage of the company's output. He said that he could not imagine EMI artists receiving any preferential treatment within Covent Garden. The opera house, he

said, was in need of somebody of Sir Colin's status.

Ash Khandekar, editor of *Opera Now*, said: "It's a non-executive post, completely unpaid. A lot of people are muddling up this appointment with the chief executive, which it isn't. The thing about Southgate is he's there to

bring in business sponsors, to take it off the elitist private sponsors' hands. I do not see a direct conflict. I don't think someone like Southgate would do anything that didn't make good sense commercially." He said the Royal Opera House had already produced recordings with EMI, among them *Peter Grimes*.

Sir Colin himself, who is credited with having restored EMI's fortunes, selling off businesses ranging from films to electronics to focus exclusively on music publishing and retailing, said that a conflict of interests was "more apparent than real and it's not likely to work against the public interest."

Another observer said: "Covent Garden's jolly lucky that its need coincided with a period when Southgate was looking for a public role. He long ago made his pile and has had great personal success."

Commenting on whether there was a potential conflict,



As chairman, Sir Colin Southgate is credited with turning round the fortunes of EMI

Bill Holland, divisional director of Polygram Classics, which includes Decca, Deutsche Grammophon and Philips—said: "It hadn't occurred to me. He's a man of great integrity. Although he'll be involved with the ROH in a broad sense, there'll be a whole team involved in plan-

ning. Perhaps I'm naive, but I don't think he'd survive five minutes if he behaved in a partisan way."

One EMI shareholder expressed concern, however, about how much of Sir Colin's time would be taken up by Royal Opera House business: "The record business isn't in

such a rosy condition. How come he's got time for this?"

Approved by the ROH board, Sir Colin's appointment was delayed by the need for formal approval from both Chris Smith, the Culture Secretary, and the Arts Council.

Leading article, page 19

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Coma victim woke to accuse her husband

By RICHARD DUCE

A FORMER secretary to the Cabinet Office accused her husband of trying to kill her as she recovered from horrific head injuries in hospital, a jury was told yesterday.

Ann Fiddler, a former Civil Servant who had become a prostitute, believed her husband Brett, 34 years her junior, had left her for dead in the attack at their home, where she entertained male clients.

DNA tests are alleged to have led police instead to Victor Farrant, who is accused of trying to murder Mrs Fiddler, 45, and then going on to murder his girlfriend.

Mr Fiddler, 31, who ran a gymnasium close to the couple's home in Eastleigh, Southampton, gave a graphic description of returning from work on December 27, 1995, to find his blonde-haired wife slumped against the tumble-dryer in the kitchen. He told the jury: "I didn't realise who it was at all. I can't describe it, it was just red. I couldn't see anything but a bloody mass of hair. I telephoned 999 and was holding her, trying to keep her warm."

Under cross-examination by Richard Camden Pratt,

QC, defending Mr Farrant, Mr Fiddler said he had telephoned his wife in hospital after she emerged from a two-week coma. He said he had been shocked when she asked him: "You tried to kill me, didn't you?"

The court was told that Mrs Fiddler filed for divorce after the attack and went to stay with her parents near Salisbury after she was released from hospital.

Mr Fiddler told the court that on the day of the attack he believed his wife had been expecting a client. The prosecution alleges that the client was Mr Farrant, 48, who attacked Mrs Fiddler with three bottles and a knife and rammed her head against the oven door with such force that the toughened glass shattered.

It is alleged also that in February 1996 Mr Farrant smothered his girlfriend, Glenda Hoskins, 45, an accountant, and hid her body in the loft of her waterfront home near Portsmouth. He went to Belgium but was later brought back to England. He denies charges of murder and attempted murder.

The trial continues today.

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I was flabbergasted by offer, says Branson

High Court told of lunch date with director of rival lottery company, Joanna Bale reports

RICHARD BRANSON told the High Court yesterday that the "most odious man" he had ever met attempted to bribe him to withdraw his bid to run the National Lottery.

George Carman, QC, his barrister, what his reaction had been. Mr Branson said: "I have never been so flabbergasted in my life. No body has ever tried to bribe me before. This person was trying effectively to stop us making a bid to run the lottery where all the profits would have gone to good causes and I asked him, 'What on earth do you mean?'"

Mr Branson, who was accompanied at the lunch at his home in Holland Park, West London, in 1993 by John Jackson, his business adviser, said: "John Jackson's eyebrows were hitting the ceiling. Snowden was sitting there sweating and mopping his forehead. There was a deathly hush. I had no wish to be in the presence of this man any more."

to show Mr Snowden out he went to see Will Whitehorn, Virgin's head of public relations. "I told Mr Whitehorn, 'You won't believe it, somebody's just tried to bribe us. I might have used the words 'one of the most odious men I have ever met in my life.'"

Richard Ferguson, QC, for GTech, said earlier that Mr Branson's allegations were a "cowardly attack" that he had taken two years to make.



Branson, left, claims Snowden made offer over lunch

relations director, for saying he lied about the attempted bribe. Mr Snowden, 52, is suing Mr Branson for alleging that he tried to bribe him. GTech and Mr Rendine claim that Mr Branson had made the allegation when he knew, or ought to have known, there was insufficient evidence to support it. The case continues.

Three face inquiry on crocodile river death

BY STEPHEN FARRELL AND SAM KILLY

THREE companions of a wealthy British tourist, who disappeared from the bank of a crocodile-infested river, will be questioned by South African police today.

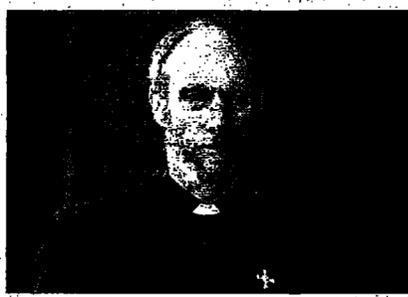


Enid Golightly yesterday. She told the jury she was "very sad" about the court case

I trust him, says wife of accused clergyman

Alleged hammer victim tells of loving marriage. Paul Wilkinson reports

THE wife of a clergyman accused of trying to kill her with a hammer spoke in his defence from the witness box yesterday.



The Rev Michael Golightly: denies attempted murder

had refused to talk to police because she had been frightened. Mr. Graham asked: "What were you frightened of?" Mrs Golightly: "The police. I have never had dealings with the police before."

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Wives could lose tax independence

Working women fear the ending of a cherished freedom under Gordon Brown's plans, reports Anne Ashworth

THE Government has found a new target in its endeavour to curb welfare spending: the have-it-all career woman.

Gordon Brown's plans to tax child benefit and cap maternity benefit may require the withdrawal of one of the modern wife's most cherished freedoms — the right to be taxed independently of her husband.

Under the current benefit system, money is paid out irrespective of income. The stay-at-home wife of a duke is entitled to the same benefits as the non-working spouse of a dustman. If the income of the household as a whole is considered though, they would come out very differently.

Support for such a move has come from the journalist Polly Toynbee, who declares herself willing to sacrifice independent taxation for a better deal for all her sex. Writing in this month's edition of *Prospect* magazine, Ms Toynbee suggests that wives would abandon the "fine feminist victory" of separate taxation.

Take the example of Nicola Horlick, City fund manager and working mother-of-five. Mrs Horlick who is expected to earn £1.1 million this year, receives £47 a week in child benefit (£11 for the first child and £9 for the rest) rising to £48.65 when benefits are uprated in April.

During each pregnancy she has been entitled to six weeks' maternity pay of 90 per cent of her earnings, paid by her employer who is then reimbursed by the State. This means that Mrs Horlick was pocketing a five-figure sum from the State each week. By contrast, a woman earning less than £62 a week, the level at which National Insurance becomes payable, is not entitled to maternity pay.

Under affluence testing, the Government's latest solution to the spiralling cost of welfare, currently more than £90 billion, the wealthy and those on middle incomes might not qualify for state subsidies, or might see their payouts reduced, allowing help to be redirected to the truly needy.

At retirement, those who

are comfortably well off might also be denied the basic state pension: currently the right of all those who have paid the correct number of National Insurance contributions. To replace this index-linked pension of £3,247 a year, Mrs Horlick would need, at today's prices, to have accumulated an extra £61,000 at retirement, surely no problem given her earning power.

However, the average person ends his or her working life with a pension fund of well below £100,000, meaning that they cannot look askance on the state pension.

The Government could opt to withdraw benefits entirely from the better-off. But it might also favour making some benefits taxable in the hands of those who earn well. However, to guarantee that

would give the Chancellor about £1 billion a year extra to play with, even before child benefit was made subject to tax.

However, accountants point out that the repeal of independent taxation might discourage marriage and undermine the Government's attempt to be seen as the guardian of traditional values. Maurice Fitzpatrick, partner at Chantrey Vellacott, said: "Before 1990, many of my clients chose not to marry because their tax position was more advantageous as cohabitants."

Accountants also point out the inequity of obliging a married couple who are, at present, basic-rate taxpayers, to aggregate their income for tax purposes, so forcing them to become higher-rate taxpayers.

The Government would also need to fear a rebellion from the reasonably well-off, who have been content to pay high rates of tax and National Insurance knowing that they would receive certain benefits, including the basic state pension.

The Institute for Fiscal Studies pointed out that the administrative costs of changing the taxation system would almost outweigh any money raised through taxation.

Andrew Dilnot, the institute's director, said that taxing child benefit at the basic rate would raise a maximum of £1.3 billion, while taxing those on the higher rate would raise only £300 million. Means testing maternity benefits would raise less than £100 million.

Of the 275,000 mothers who get statutory maternity benefit a year, only 10,000 are on the higher tax rate.

The Institute also pointed out that cohabiting couples would also have to have their income jointly assessed, which would involve gathering huge amounts of information. All children would have to be registered at birth, with details of the father given to the Social Security Department or the Inland Revenue.

However, Treasury officials are convinced that substantial welfare reforms could go ahead without losing independent assessment of taxation. They argue that enough information is available now.

Tony Blair, page 18

Horlick thousands in maternity pay

this would make money available to increase child benefit, the Government might need to end the independent taxation of husbands and wives.

Although Mrs Horlick would pay higher-rate tax on her child benefit, she is a rare animal. Just 2.2 million of the nation's 25.9 million taxpayers are the higher rate bracket, and women are not proportionately represented.

To gain the maximum revenue, allowing for increases in payouts, the Government would need to arrange for child benefit to be taxed at the higher rate. This would be accomplished by taxing the money as the husband's income, as he is more likely to be a higher-rate taxpayer. The repeal of independent taxation

regarded by the Inland Revenue as little more than her husband's chattel.

Under the old system, married working women received no personal tax allowance and were assessed jointly with their husbands. All a family's income was placed under the husband's name and taxed after deducting his married man's allowance. Married couples were placed in the same tax bracket as a single person.

Independent taxation was announced in the Budget that year, ending centuries during which a married woman was

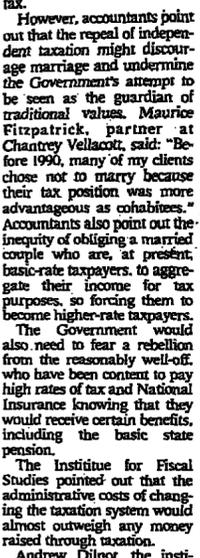
cohabiting partners, taxed individually, received more than 25 per cent more in allowances.

The introduction of separate taxation, though, has several times scuppered plans to means-test or tax child benefit. The Tory Government twice rejected taxing the benefit during the last Parliament because it imposed a higher tax assessment

ment of household incomes. Should Gordon Brown, the Chancellor, find a way around the problem of differentiating between well-off and low-income families and replace child benefit with tax credits, he would be turning the clock back to the days before the benefit was introduced in 1976.

The family allowance, which preceded universal child benefit payments, offered a tax credit to families with children, normally paid through the father's paypacket. The Wilson Government decided to phase it out and replace it with a universal benefit paid to the children's principle carer — nearly always the mother — in part to ensure that the money was spent on its intended beneficiaries rather than in the pub or the betting shop.

THE Duke and Duchess of Westminster and, above right, Ruth Kelly and Derek Gadd, and below right, Phil Cole and Caroline Flint



THE Duke and Duchess of Westminster and, above right, Ruth Kelly and Derek Gadd, and below right, Phil Cole and Caroline Flint

TONY BLAIR'S most loyal supporters among Labour's new intake of women MPs will be worse off if child benefit is reformed (Nicholas Watt writes). Ruth Kelly and Caroline Flint, who juggle their political careers with raising children, will lose more than £5 a week per child if the benefit is taxed. However, the Duchess of Westminster, who does not work and

whose husband is the fifth richest person in Britain with a £1.7 billion fortune, will retain her entitlement to claim £38.05 a week for her four children, unless her income from personal investments exceeds the tax threshold of

£30,145. Ruth Kelly, 29, MP for Bolton West, is entitled to claim £11.05 a week for her son Eamon. If child benefit is taxed Ms Kelly, who pays the higher rate of tax, will be left with £6.60 a week. Her salary is supplement-

ed by her husband, Derek Gadd, who earns up to £20,000 as a trainee teacher. Caroline Flint, 36, MP for Don Valley, is entitled to claim £29.05 for her three children. If child benefit is taxed she will be left with £17.40 a week. Her salary is supplemented by her partner, Phil Cole, who earns less than £20,000 as her parliamentary assistant.

The winners and losers

Will Chancellor turn back the clock?

By MARK HENDERSON

MARRIED women first won the right to own property in 1882 and the right to vote in 1918, but it was not until 1988 that they won the right to be taxed independently of their husbands.

Independent taxation was announced in the Budget that year, ending centuries during which a married woman was

regarded by the Inland Revenue as little more than her husband's chattel.

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Euro could stir up extremism, Portillo warns

MICHAEL PORTILLO gave warning yesterday that a European single currency could stir up "nationalism and extremism" as he launched the next stage of his political comeback.

The former Defence Secretary, who lost his seat at the general election, said that economic and monetary union risked destabilising Europe and Britain should never join.

His clear rejection of EMU came as Cecil Parkinson, chairman of the Tory party, told colleagues in Strasbourg that a Conservative government could join a single currency before the end of the next Parliament. That appeared at odds with Tory policy of ruling out any such move for ten years.

Mr Portillo, in a speech to the rightwing Institute of Economic Affairs that had been cleared by William Hague, said that there could be no exit from a single currency, which he described as a "decisive step" in a "headlong rush" to European political union. He argued that Britain's European partners saw the single currency as a way to create a union that could "free Europe from the fear of conflict between nations". In reality it would do the opposite, he said.

EMU was a centralising force that would diminish

Jill Sherman and Charles Bremner on the latest step in a political revival

democracy and could lead to further conflict in Europe. While the European Union was partly engineered to stamp out nationalism and bolster democracy this would now be threatened by further integration.

"It seems that those who want to create a United States believe that nationalism has been the principal cause of conflict. They think that if you can replace the nation states and make the nations of Europe dependent on each other in a new European state, you will have dealt with the problem of nationalism and therefore abolished the main cause of war."

But he two other things had been necessary in past wars: despotism and a sense of grievance with dictators capitalising on supposed injustice to their nation, and minorities seeking freedom from foreign repressors.

The end of the Second World War had seen the restoration of democracy. His Spanish father had fought for democracy in Spain and was a "refugee from tyranny" for 20 years. "To see democracy restored there brought my family great joy."

Europe was now more secure from conflict than ever before, because there had never been so many democracies in the past, and it was "inconceivable" that those would go to war with each other.

"European integration is not the means to achieve the security of our Continent. It is the wrong route. Integration is being designed in a way that sharply reduces democratic

control. If we shoehorn the nations of Europe into an artificial union, we will not abolish nationalism, indeed we risk stirring it up.

The danger is that we make people feel that their national interests will be overlooked, and that they cannot assert them through the ballot. That risks exactly what the architects of the new Europe say they wish to avoid — destabilising Europe, creating tensions and releasing resentments that damage the present good relations between European nations."

He argued that the single currency would destroy democratic control in Europe because responsibility over economic decisions would be taken by the European Central Bank rather than member states. "Once large numbers of people cease to have faith in the system, extremism can take hold, including extremist nationalism."

He criticised Labour's blind



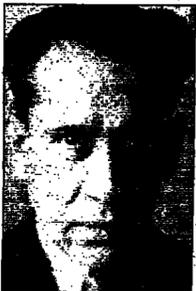
Michael Portillo: friends say that he plans an early return to Westminster

enthusiasm for Europe and took a sideways swipe at the Tory grandees, including Chris Patten, who signed a letter to *The Independent* two weeks ago criticising Mr Hague's policy on Europe. "Those who are most influencing the progress of Europe

have become dreadfully confused. They believe that European integration is the only guarantee of future security, and they are pursuing the objective with a single-mindedness that borders on fanaticism."

Yesterday friends of Mr

Portillo made clear that he would seize the first opportunity to return to Westminster. Colleagues at Westminster are already speculating about a run-off between him and Chris Patten in a future leadership contest, representing two factions of the party.



Portillo Star: he was a refugee from tyranny

Why Hague is unwise to bet against EMU

No party in Opposition should bet against the future, but that is what the Tories are in danger of doing over monetary union. They are failing to distinguish between what they would like to see happen and what may happen. William Hague can argue his case, but he has no say over whether monetary union starts next January, which countries join and how the launch goes.

The Shadow Cabinet's shift last autumn away from ruling out participation in the "foreseeable future" to not in the next eight to ten years amounts to a one-way bet not only on a single currency falling but also on Britain not joining. Hence, my reaction to Michael Portillo's elegant and forceful attack last night on both the economics and principle of monetary union was: "What if you are wrong? Where will the Tories stand if a single currency works?"

Mr Portillo was much more

abolish nationalism, indeed we risk stirring it up." The snag is that this analysis is not shared by the key players in the European debate.

Mr Portillo's views are backed by Mr Hague and probably a majority of Tory MPs, as well as most party members. Perversely, the impact of his speech may be greater than if he were still inside the Commons holding a major Shadow post, and possibly looking somewhat tarnished like some other survivors of the Major Cabinet. But his reputation has been enhanced by the nature and reflective way he has behaved since his defeat last May — the "Comeback kid" as *The Sun* dubbed him in anticipation yesterday.

The applause that Mr Portillo enjoyed last night may reinforce the feelings of Tory sceptics that the party at last has a policy based on principle and is speaking with a clear voice. But prudence is seldom politically sensible. Even if monetary union does hit problems, perhaps in three or four years when European economies are slowing down, then Britain will not be able to say: "We told you so." Such a breakdown or dislocation would have serious adverse consequences for the whole of Europe, including Britain. That is why it is in Britain's interests for monetary union to succeed.

Business support for entry may increase by the time of the next election, so the Tories will risk looking outside the mainstream, just as Labour did in the mid-1980s. That is, of course, just what Tony Blair wants. Mr Hague will have boxed himself in without a realistic alternative. Not all Tory pro-Europeans are strong supporters of monetary union. Some, like Douglas Hurd and Chris Patten, have doubts, but believe that Britain cannot stand aside from such a momentous change if it is successfully launched. Mr Hague would have done better not to commit himself unconditionally against, but to warn, to question and to retain flexibility about decisions over which he has little influence.

PETER RIDDELL

RIDDELL ON POLITICS

thoughtful than the usual trade and Brussels rhetoric of some Tory Eurosceptics. In his speech to the Institute of Economic Affairs, he challenged the argument that has bound together the Franco-German alliance for the past 40 years, and is the main motivation of Chancellor Helmut Kohl — that integration is vital to preserving peace and stability in Europe.

I well remember a conversation with Mr Portillo more than six years ago when he argued that his generation, born in the mid-1950s, did not share the fear of Germany of the Cold War generation. Last night, he said that the Euro-sceptics were looking back instead of forward in urging centralisation. "They are mainly motivated by a fear that the past may repeat itself, that Franco-German rivalry or rampant German nationalism may re-awake." Therefore, "European integration is not the means to achieve security. If we shoehorn the nations of Europe into an artificial union, we will not

SATURDAY IN THE TIMES

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Algeria rejects EU's 'low-rank' anti-terror team

FROM CHARLES BREMNER IN STRASBOURG

BRITAIN'S attempts to lead a European Union mission to look into Algeria's civil conflict suffered a setback yesterday when the Algerian authorities, already bristling at "foreign interference", rejected the team as too low-ranking.

Algerians said that the mission of officials from Britain, Luxembourg and Austria would have "no meaning at this level". The reaction, reflecting Algerian reluctance to discuss the wave of massacres, came hours after Robin Cook, the Foreign Secretary, called for access to the sites of recent massacres.

Mr Cook, speaking for the EU presidency, said there was no evidence to back reports — from opposition figures and foreign experts — that the Algerian security services, as well as Islamic extremists, had been involved in the killings.

The EU agreed on Tuesday, under the pressure of public opinion, to send the so-called troika mission, composed of officials in charge of regional policy in foreign ministries. The relatively junior level was a calculated response to Algerians' insistence that any

mission must limit its agenda to discussing the fight against terrorism rather than investigating killings. A British spokesman said the Government was disappointed, but hoped a solution could be found. Britain was ready to send a ministerial delegation.

Despite the rebuff, Algeria has agreed to a separate British request that François Gordon, the UK Ambassador in the country, be allowed to visit Sidi Hammed, scene of last weekend's massacre. Britain had sought permission for visits to both Sidi Hammed and Relizane, where another massacre took place.

Mr Cook said that the "latest massacres and the scale of the savagery involved have been appalling", but he added: "We have seen no evidence to support allegations of involvement by the Algerian security authorities."

"It is in the interests of the Algerian authorities to let the press see for themselves what is going on in their country, and who is responsible for the terrorism." Official obstruction and simple danger have kept foreign media away from

Algeria's "killing fields" for three years. The demands for international action came after publicity about the rising scale of bloodshed.

On a visit to the European Parliament, Mr Cook acknowledged the limited scope of the mission of officials from the troika representing the previous, present and next presidencies. Speaking before Algeria's refusal, he said: "This is a starting point that will enable us to put forward concrete and specific steps that Europe can take to put an end to the terrorism."

He added: "The objective of the troika mission will be to convey to the Algerian Government the public concern felt in Europe at the massacres and to explore with them what can be done to end the violence, and what the EU can do." Mr Cook added that the EU wanted to press Algeria to drop its resistance to visits by United Nations human rights officials.

Steering an EU response to the Algerian conflict is the first test of British diplomacy since London took over the six-month presidency.



Robin Cook at a Strasbourg press conference after his plan for a troika mission was snubbed by Algeria

Leader of banned activists arrested

FROM SUSAN BELL IN PARIS

A SENIOR leader of the banned Islamic Salvation Front was arrested in Algiers after giving interviews to Western newspapers and detained overnight before being released yesterday, party leaders said.

Abdelkader Hachani, described as the No 3 in the Front's chain of command, has given several interviews to foreign newspapers recently, urging Western governments to put pressure on the Algerian authorities to negotiate with the party.

A statement faxed to Paris by leaders of the Front in Germany said that Mr Hachani had been taken to central police headquarters on Tuesday night "apparently without motive".

A chemical engineer, Mr Hachani, 40, was released from prison in July after serving a five-year sentence, imposed when the Algerian military cancelled the general election in 1992 when it looked as if the fundamentalist Front were poised to win.

Algerians: Fifteen armed Islamic fundamentalists were killed by security forces in Algeria and two civilians had their throats cut in the past two days, newspapers reported yesterday. (AFP)

Torture victims accuse military rulers of fostering death squads



Algerian refugees yesterday at the foundation where they are receiving care

FOR Abdullah, a former professor of Islamic law, the memory of the humiliation and degradation is still as hurtful as the pain he suffers every time he urinates. Both are due to the electric shocks Algerian government torturers applied to his genitals.

He knows who his tormentors were: the police, security forces and army agents, who arrested him and threatened to break his head open if he did not reveal the knowledge he had inside it. For eight months in a camp in the Sahara they took him to regular interrogation sessions. There were beatings, mock executions, electrical shocks and sexual humiliation.

Ahmed, formerly a respected imam at an eastern Algerian village mosque, suffered the same treatment. For many of their companions and fellow members of the Islamic movement arrested after the 1992 army coup that nullified the elections, the torture was even more taunting. Wives would be

Michael Binyon meets refugees who still bear mental scars from the 1992 army coup that suppressed the Islamic movement

raped in front of them. Brothers were ordered to have sex with their sisters. Anal rape was routine.

Abdullah, who was quickly granted asylum when British doctors reported the scale of his injuries, has been helped by the Medical Foundation for the Care of Victims of Torture to come to terms with what happened. But he still has nightmares. "I think of what happened. They used to put me in a pit, up to my waist, and then fire at me, the bullets just grazing my head and ears. I cannot sleep at night. My brother is 60 and has been in prison ten years, and my family are still in Algeria. Thank God my wife and

children were able to get out a year ago and join me here in England." Ahmed also spoke of the memories, the worries about friends in the Islamic movement and the kind of people who did the torturing. "They were trained in special camps. We know these people. Many have been recruited to the Ninja, the killing squads who are carrying out massacres of villagers to spread fear around the country. They are former soldiers, orphans without families, people who are victims of society with nothing to lose. They have a bloodlust and want to avenge themselves on society. The powers [the term always applied to the

authorities] are encouraging them to do so."

Both men acknowledged that Islamic terrorists also committed atrocities. But they are convinced that the Government created the most savage group, the Armed Islamic Group, and is keeping the army aside while the group carries out massacres, especially in the areas where voters supported the Islamic movement.

"Why has the Government never allowed any inquiry into who did these things? Why do they not allow any outsiders in to investigate? There are people who are using these events to keep themselves in power."

He said many of those who had been forced to watch the rape of their wives committed suicide. He had also contemplated suicide. Medically, he now seems fit, in spirit, he says, he is broken. "I cannot make sense of my life here now. I keep thinking about what is happening there."

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Police computer on trail of forest killers

FROM BEN MACINTYRE IN PARIS

THIRTEEN people have been arrested on suspicion of murder in northern France after a police computer came up with a solution to a crime that has baffled investigators for almost a decade.

Gilles Naudet and Anne-Sophie Vandamme, an engaged couple aged 25, left their homes in Versailles to take a romantic walk in the forest of Fontainebleau in October 1988, saying they would return in a few hours. Their bodies, and that of their dog, Dundee, were discovered in shallow graves almost three months later. They had been shot.

The so-called "Fontainebleau fiancé murders" became an immediate cause célèbre and police interviewed thousands of hikers, and others who used the forest, in particular suspected poachers, hunters, gamekeepers and local gun enthusiasts. The authorities strongly suspected that game poachers were involved. Suspicions of a terrorist link were also raised when police uncovered a cache of explosives buried near where the bodies were found.

Naudet had been killed with four shots, while his fiancée had died from a single, execu-



Gilles Naudet and Anne-Sophie Vandamme, the murdered lovers; and police searching the forest of Fontainebleau in December 1988. Their bodies were unearthed there a few weeks later

tion-style bullet to the head. Their dog, a large Pyrenean mountain dog, had also been shot. The bullets all came from 22 sporting rifles.

A breakthrough finally came after the authorities obtained a powerful computer from the Canadian police, capable of analysing thou-

sands of pages of testimony and identifying possible contradictions. "Unlike papers and people, this machine forgets nothing," one investigator said.

After feeding the evidence into the computer, police closed in on a large hunting and poaching ring in the

forest. On Tuesday, gendarmes staged simultaneous raids at seven locations in and around the forest, detaining 20 people suspected of links to organised poaching. Thirteen remained in custody yesterday.

Police now believe the case was a hunting accident that

turned murderous. Investigators say the young lovers appear to have been following a woodland path left by deer, unaware that hunters were lying in wait.

"Dundee was the same colour and size as a young deer," one investigator said yesterday. "The gunman may have

mistaken the dog for a doe and killed it. Gilles probably got angry, and perhaps threatened to call the police. He was then hit by two bullets, and finished off by two more. The last witness had to be disposed of. Anne-Sophie was killed with a bullet in the nape of the neck. A professional poacher

with a gun in his hand is capable of anything, even murder."

Nine 22-calibre rifles were confiscated by police from the suspects' homes, along with two vehicles and other arms.

With hindsight, police say, their work may have been hampered by the very notori-

ety of the case. Public interest was so great, and the accumulated evidence so vast, that only a machine was able to plough through the results and identify inconsistencies.

"You can't kill two people without eventually showing it in the way you act," the police investigator said.

Crumbling Bolshoi Theatre launches global cash plea

FROM ROBIN LODGE IN MOSCOW

THE directors of Moscow's Bolshoi Theatre had talks in Paris yesterday on a plan for an international campaign to raise more than £200 million needed to save the 142-year-old theatre building from collapse.

A spokeswoman for the Bolshoi said Vladimir Vasiliev, the theatre's artistic director, and Vladimir Kokonin, the executive director, had met officials from the Paris-based United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation to discuss proposals by the agency to launch a drive to raise the £220 million the theatre needs to carry out urgent repairs and renovation.

The ornate building near the Kremlin, with its lavish gilded and red plush auditorium, has been long the for-

restoration work. Last year the Bolshoi company was preparing to move into temporary premises to allow the project to go ahead. A lack of funds led to the indefinite postponement of the work, despite an appeal by Mr Vasiliev, who said that he feared the balcony could collapse.

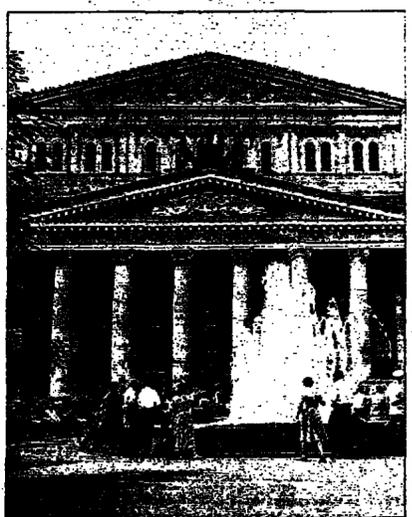
President Yeltsin and Yuri Luzhkov, Mayor of Moscow, the main forces behind the huge amount of restoration that has been going on in the Russian capital over the past two years, have called for government funding for repairs to the Bolshoi, but so far without success. The spokeswoman said last night she was not yet aware of the outcome of the Paris meeting.

The Bolshoi, once one of the great world centres for ballet and opera, is suffering from

more than disrepair. Desperately short of funds, it has been losing its best performers abroad for the past decade and no longer enjoys a reputation for excellence.

When Mr Vasiliev was appointed two and a half years ago, he promised to reinvigorate the theatre and restore its ballet to the best in the world. He said he would bring in star conductors and the best dancers, as well as innovation in production.

He has not had the funds to pay for the stars and his innovative efforts have largely been dismissed by the critics. One of his first productions, his own version of Tchaikovsky's classic *Swan Lake*, was ridiculed by one critic as "a banal family drama packed in swan's feathers".



Bolshoi Theatre, which is in danger of collapse

Skinheads beaten to the punch

FROM RICHARD OWEN IN ROME

Usedom, Germany: A group of German skinheads took on more than they could handle, attacking black foreigners who turned out to be members of a boxing team. Two skinheads were knocked out, *Bild* reported yesterday.

On Sunday, about 15 skinheads entered a billiard hall on the northeast German island of Usedom where two international boxers were playing. One jostled the Cuban Juan Carlos Gómez, made a racist remark, and ended up with a broken nose.

The next day the skinheads went to the team's hotel, near the pool hall, and pursued the boxer and his wife in their car. Another skinhead was hit in the face, the newspaper said. Police then maintained a presence at the hotel until yesterday when the boxers were due to leave. (AET)

Ice Man given cool send-off by Austria

FROM RICHARD OWEN IN ROME

ITALIAN scientists have brushed aside last-minute objections by Austria to the transfer of a 5,000-year-old frozen corpse - known as the Ice Man - to Italy.

Professor Konrad Spindler of Innsbruck University, a scientific adviser to the Austrian Government on the mummified prehistoric remains, had told *La Stampa* there were "considerable doubts" about the efficacy of the Italian refrigeration unit in which the Ice Man is to be displayed to the public at Bolzano, in the Italian Tyrol. He said Austria, which holds the remains at present but lost a custody battle over their future, also had ethical objections to the proposed "public display of a naked human body".

But Italian experts insist that the specially built

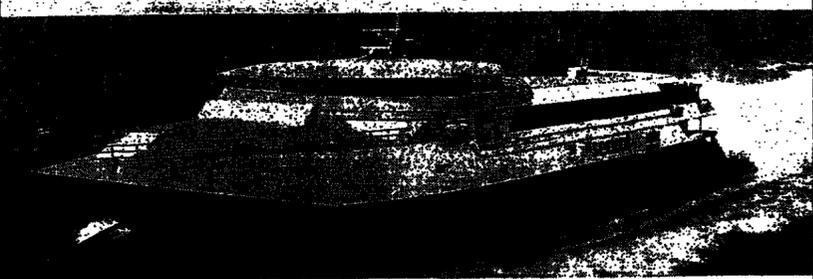
um in Bolzano which will contain the body was not only technically perfect but had a back-up refrigeration unit. "It is a technical level which will keep the Ice Man at a constant temperature of -4C (25F) with humidity of close to 100 per cent," said one expert in Bolzano.

The Ice Man was found by Austrian climbers in September 1991 in a glacier 10,000ft above sea level, at a remote border spot known as Similaun to Italians and Otz to Austrians.

Unesco has declared the corpse to be an archaeological find "of importance for all humanity". But a mediation committee of international surveyors concluded that the corpse "had been found" 79 yards within Italian territory, and was therefore Italian.

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It's what you want to know

Less sex is price of a little learning

FROM TOM RHODES IN WASHINGTON

IN depressing news for swots, a survey showed yesterday that the more students learned the less often they had sex.

The study, to be published next month, shows that Americans with the most education have the least sex postgraduates averaged 52 sexual acts last year compared with 61 by graduates and 59 by high school students.

But according to the General Social Survey for the University of Chicago, people who spend more than 60 hours a week in the office are 10 per cent more sexually active than colleagues who return home early each evening.

It also emerged that a small core of 15 per cent of adults was responsible for 50 per cent of all sexual activity while one in five, mainly elderly or widowed Americans, had no sex at all last year.

Only one person in 20 indulged in intercourse three times a week while, perhaps as expected, husbands and wives maintained a traditional "once a week" approach.

Overall, the report concluded that Americans were far less sexual than received wisdom might otherwise suggest.

Swedish heir to throne flees media

FROM LENNART UTTERSTROM IN STOCKHOLM

FEARING the life of a harassed icon like that of Diana, Princess of Wales, Sweden's Crown Princess Victoria is moving to America.

The life of the Swedish princess already has uncanny echoes of her English counterpart: she suffers from both an eating disorder and the attentions of the media.

Now the heir to the throne has abandoned plans to study at the University of Uppsala and will attend an American university. It is believed she will study at Princeton though the university has yet to confirm her registration.

"The goal... among other things is to give the Crown Princess the possibility to be in peace and to be undisturbed to pursue her studies," said Elisabeth Tarras-Wahlberg, the Royal Household spokeswoman.

Princess Victoria, 20, backed out of her commitment to study political science at Uppsala when media attention intensified last autumn. One newspaper this week even printed a detailed floorplan of an apartment she had considered in Uppsala.

Interest in the Crown Princess grew after newspapers ran photographs of her appearing significantly thinner than before. After initially fending off questions, the Royal Household admitted she had an eating disorder.

"Essentially, she has been on every cover of certain magazines. And certain tabloids have done lengthy and perhaps unnecessary reporting," Ms Tarras-Wahlberg said. It appears Princess Victoria

has had anorexia since the spring. In November last year the Swedish Court confirmed the rumours and asked the media to leave the Crown Princess in peace, but this merely encouraged the tabloid press to increase their coverage of the heir to the throne.

For the next five months Princess Victoria has dropped all official engagements. Though the Swedish Court has refused to disclose which university Victoria has chosen she visited Princeton University in New Jersey during November.

The Stockholm court refuses to comment on the whereabouts of the Princess, but a spokesman for the Royal Family said the Crown Princess intends to study English and American society.

The popular press coverage of Sweden's King Carl XVI Gustaf, Queen Silvia and their three children is less intrusive than that given to some other royal families, such as Britain's and Monaco's. But media pressure is clearly growing on members of the royal family, who are generally low-key and wary of ostentation.

A magazine last year sparked a controversy after it published doctored photos of Princess Victoria's head superimposed on a model's swimsuit-clad body. The magazine made clear that the photos were manipulated and the swimsuits were comparatively modest, but the move was regarded as sufficiently outrageous to warrant censure of the magazine by Sweden's press council.



Crown Princess Victoria: pursued by the media and has eating disorder.

Hooligans face fast-track courts at World Cup

FROM BEN MACINTYRE IN PARIS

THE French authorities will use a system of fast-track justice for hooligans at the World Cup this summer, they revealed yesterday.

There will be a state prosecutor at each match who will speed up the process for supporters who step out of line. The prosecutor will investigate the case there and then, when police bring alleged offenders to him, and rule as quickly as possible whether charges should be brought.

The move was disclosed after talks between British football and police chiefs and their French counterparts in Paris.

Troublemakers could be brought before the courts within 48 hours, Nicholas Jacquet, a magistrate from the French Interior Ministry, said after the meeting.

Hooligans could be fined, deported or sentenced to prison terms, depending on the gravity of the offence, M Jacquet said. A prosecutor will be on 24-hour standby in each French city where World Cup matches are to be played.

The prosecutors will have powers to arrest troublemakers, and hooligans will face minimum sentences of a year for such offences as hurling missiles, inciting hatred or assault, M Jacquet said.

During the conference British police officials emphasised that their French counterparts that the hard core of British football thugs would be de-

terred most by the threat of prison, pointing out that some hooligans would see deportation from France as "a free ride home", and that a blow to the head with a French police truncheon might be paraded "as a battle scar in the bar back home".

Tim Hollis, the Assistant Chief Constable of South Yorkshire Police, who is coordinating liaison with the French World Cup authorities, said that British police would be providing intelligence on the movements and identities of known football hooligans before and during the tournament. The French organisers said that a force of between six and 15 British plainclothes police officers with extensive knowledge of football hooliganism would be present as "spotters" at every match involving England or Scotland.

Both British and French officials emphasised that, while the "vast majority" of fans coming to France from Britain would do so in a "festive and friendly" spirit, preparations were under way to ensure that "the small number who may seek to disrupt the World Cup" faced an uncompromising reception.

The Football Association welcomed the French approach. "There will be a warm hand of welcome waiting for genuine fans, and an iron fist for the hooligans," said Steve Double, an FA spokesman.

Hashimoto's party angered by apology to newspaper

FROM ROBERT WHYMANT IN TOKYO

JAPANESE conservatives yesterday sharply rebuked Kyutaro Hashimoto, the Prime Minister, for apologising over the ill-treatment of British prisoners of war through *The Sun* newspaper.

"Mr Hashimoto has thrown pride to the winds," said Hideaki Kase, a former government adviser and leading intellectual of the Right. "He apologised to Mr Blair on Monday. Why did he lower his head again on Wednesday, taking a tabloid newspaper as his forum?"

Mr Hashimoto's personal article, restating Japan's regret for the sufferings of British POWs, provoked astonishment in the Japanese media. A Jiji News Agency report said it was "a highly

unprecedented move". Asked by reporters how he came to write for *The Sun*, Mr Hashimoto emphasised that he did so because Mr Blair made the request at their meeting on Monday. "I was asked by Mr Blair would I write it, and could I do it that evening?" Mr Hashimoto said, according to Japanese newspapers yesterday.

"Mr Hashimoto's article is bound to arouse the nationalist majority of his ruling Liberal Democratic Party.

Some Japanese journalists were doubtful that a visiting leader would commission an article on behalf of a newspaper. They surmised that the Japanese Foreign Ministry put Mr Hashimoto up to addressing *Sun* readers directly to try to defuse the issue, and that the "request from Mr Blair" was a smokescreen.

The Tokyo Government is intensely worried about the reception awaiting Emperor Akihito in London in May, and is clearly ready to go to enormous lengths to avert a repeat of 1971, when Emperor Hirohito suffered the humiliation of silent crowds in Britain.

"This is another example of the Foreign Ministry's 'apology diplomacy'," said Hisashi Ikeda, a veteran journalist. "The Government has said sorry to China, Korea, and Britain, and any other country that demands an apology can expect to be given one. But these apologies do nothing to still the resentments [over Japan's wartime actions]."

Kaiser's 'friendship' backfired

Bonn: Speaking to the British press has always been a minefield for foreign leaders. Ninety years ago, Kaiser Wilhelm II caused an uproar in Germany after remarks made in an interview with *The Daily Telegraph*. He gave the interview, published on October 23, 1908, in an attempt to have Germany recognised as a great power by Britain.

He expressed his admiration for Britain but said he was having to steer against anti-British sentiment in

Germany. "I repeat that I am the friend of England, but you make things difficult for me... the prevailing sentiment among large sections of the middle and lower classes of my own people is not friendly to England."

The Kaiser's avowal of friendship did run counter to the German mood, inflamed by the naval arms race with Britain, and caused an uproar at home. German nationalists were already suspicious about his ambiguous attitude to Britain.



Kaiser: caused uproar

Presidents' feud leads to rioting

Podgorica: Riot police fired teargas yesterday to disperse 10,000 supporters of Momir Bulatovic, the outgoing President of Montenegro, who were contesting his defeat in last October's elections.

The protesters had gathered outside the main government building, throwing stones at lamp posts and one of its reinforced doors.

Mr Bulatovic, a pro-Belgrade hardliner, is challenging the validity of his defeat by Milo Djukanovic, a pro-Western reformer, and is refusing to give up his mandate unless new polls are called.

Bulatovic aides had met their counterparts from the Djukanovic camp throughout the day, but both sides admitted that no progress was made in narrowing their differences. It was their first meeting after three days of protests by thousands of Mr Bulatovic's supporters.

Mr Djukanovic, 36, opposes the domination of Montenegro by Serbia, its more powerful partner in federal Yugoslavia. He is accused by Mr Bulatovic of seeking to take Montenegro out of the federation. Mr Bulatovic declared yesterday: "From today, Montenegro has no President." (AFP)

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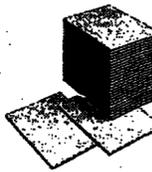
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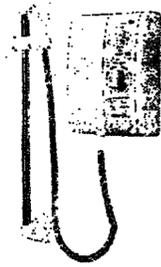


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مكتبة النور

Blunder by IMF deepened Asian economic crisis

FROM TOM RHODES IN WASHINGTON AND A SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT IN JAKARTA

THE International Monetary Fund has admitted that an important part of its Asian rescue strategy failed, causing a panic among banks that proved a catalyst for market falls in East Asia.

A confidential IMF report emerged as America announced it was working with allies to convene a meeting of industrialised nations within two months to combat the financial crisis in Asia.

The report concluded that Indonesia's economic decline was aggravated by misjudgment at the IMF's Washington headquarters. Officials assumed the closure of certain banks last November, particularly those run by relatives of

President Suharto, would inspire confidence. But it helped to bring Jakarta's banking system to the brink of collapse, sent investors fleeing from relatively safe institutions and quickened the decline of the currency, the rupiah.

Disclosures in the report came to light as Michel Camdessus, the IMF's managing director, arrived in Jakarta yesterday, saying that he expected to sign "a very solid agreement" with President Suharto. "The immediate priority is to arrest and turn around the tremendous loss of confidence and stabilise the market through monetary discipline and the dramatic acceleration of long overdue

structural reforms," he said. Earlier in the day, the 76-year-old Indonesian leader met William Cohen, the US Defence Secretary, who said Mr Suharto was "determined to deal with the issues constructively and to move very quickly on various reforms".

A new deal is necessary because Mr Suharto did not implement measures agreed last October with the IMF for a \$43 billion (£22 billion) rescue package. For the most part, the IMF report blamed the lack of reforms by Mr Suharto for the crisis.

But publication of the report could not have come at a worse time for the IMF, which faces growing criticism in the region over its planned remedies for the turmoil.

Recommendations on tight budgets, bank closures and high interest rates have been widely blamed for worsening the pain when it was claimed that businesses needed loans to combat mass unemployment and bankruptcy. The IMF report acknowledged that its demand to close 16 insolvent banks was counterproductive. "These closures, far from improving public confidence... set off a renewed 'flight to safety,'" the report concluded.

Indonesians had withdrawn \$2 billion from the banking system and shifted further funds from private banks they had assumed would be next in line for closure. By the end of November, two-thirds of all Indonesia's banks had experienced a run on deposits.

The US House banking committee announced yesterday that Robert Rubin, the US Treasury Secretary, Larry Summers, his deputy, and Alan Greenspan, chairman of the Federal Reserve, would be called to testify about the crisis at the end of the month.

Signs of recovery, page 24

Food queues and riots undermine Suharto

FROM JAMES FRINGLE IN JAKARTA

Haji Rusli, 46, a chicken seller, stabbed his finger into a newspaper photograph of President Suharto's first daughter Tunji handing over dollars for conversion into the ailing rupiah and said: "I don't believe this means anything — she is changing only a fraction of her fortune. It's all show."

His friend, Avip Bachtiar, 45, who lines up for hours daily to buy subsidised staples to resell near his home, said "only a stupid or a crazy person" would choose Mr Suharto for a seventh five-year term in elections due to be held in March.

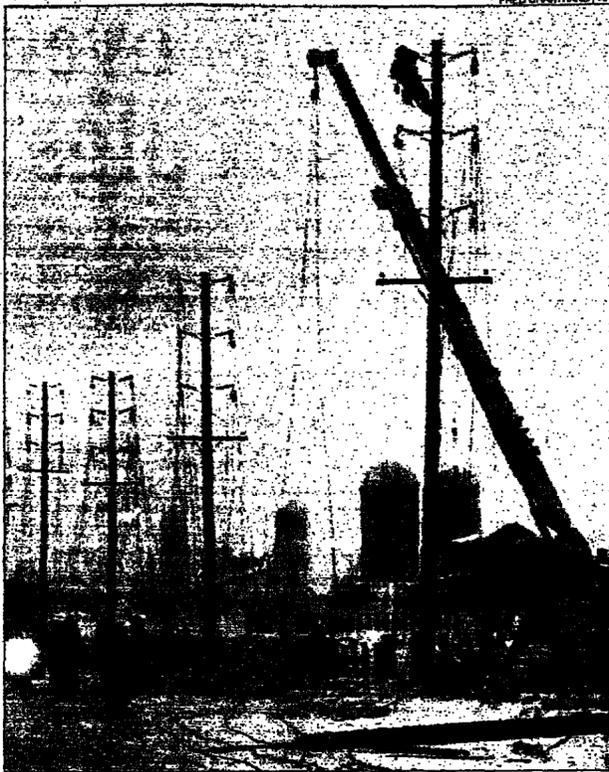
"Suharto made this problem," he said, indicating a queue of hundreds of impoverished women waiting since 4am to buy subsidised rice and cooking oil at Jakarta's Jatin Negara market, and speaking about Indonesia's economic crisis. "People are getting

poorer. For the first ten years he was in office I supported Suharto, but no longer."

At a bookstore, a book editor said: "The regime is rotten to the core and is going to collapse. But the opposition is weak, and the elite will fight among themselves to see who takes over."

The reactions came as Brigadier General Wahab Mokolongan, an army spokesman, confirmed that unrest erupted in several towns across East Java. "The trouble started when some stores sold rice dearer than the price set by the city logistics agency," he said. "There was also a limit to the amount of goods people could purchase."

Thousands of people reportedly took to the streets of Pasuruan, Jember and Banyuwangi. They destroyed shops that refused to sell food cheaply and hurled stones at troops sent to quell the riots.



Power workers brave the cold to restore electricity at St Isidore in Ontario

Canada in grip of new freeze

FROM RICHARD CLEROUX IN OTTAWA

ANOTHER cold snap descended on Quebec yesterday where 1.4 million people are still without electricity following an ice storm a week ago. So far only three people have frozen to death because of the storm, but there are fears that dozens more may be at risk.

Temperatures ranged from -4F (-20C) in Ottawa to as low as -17F (-27C) near Montreal. While 11 people were in hospital with hypothermia, carbon monoxide poisoning from improvised charcoal heaters has claimed nine lives and 163 more are being treated in hospital.

Soldiers, who had been

helping repair crews to restore electricity, joined police and emergency services to across rural Quebec looking for elderly people and forcing them into shelters — using special police powers.

Yesterday morning 413,880 homes were still without electricity in Quebec, 70,000 more in neighbouring Ontario and 1,000 in New Brunswick.

About 90 per cent of those without power are concentrated in an area between Montreal and the New York state border known as the "Triangle of Darkness". Ninety-four towns there are still under a state of emergency.

WORLD IN BRIEF

'Prophets' guide migrants to death

Harare: Police in the southern Zimbabwean border town of Beitbridge are looking for a band of conmen who may have sent 36 illegal immigrants to their deaths by guiding them to "safe" routes into South Africa across the raging, crocodile-infested waters of the Limpopo River (Jan Raath writes).

Chief Inspector Helmond Shoko of the Beitbridge police confirmed yesterday that scores had sought out the services of bogus prophets and sharp local experts this week for safe crossing points. On Sunday, 29 men launched themselves into the river after a preacher knelt on the river bank in prayer and said he had received "divine guidance" that God had cleared the way ahead for them. All were feared dead.

Cuba gives cardinal air time

Havana: Cardinal Jaime Ortega yesterday made an unprecedented half-hour appearance on communist Cuba's state television, so fulfilling a Government promise to give the church television time to advertise next week's visit by the Pope. No Roman Catholic cardinal had addressed the nation on television since shortly after the 1959 Cuban revolution. Cuba officially embraced atheism in 1962 and maintained it until 1992. The cardinal touched on two politically sensitive issues: human rights and the Pope's role in opposing communism in Eastern Europe. He also gave a brief Bible lesson and spoke about Christian liberty. (AP)

Blue Room sprayed brown

Washington: The Secret Service yesterday launched an inquiry into security at the White House after a woman tourist defaced the Blue Room and two sculptures with a spray can of reddish-brown paint (Tom Rhodes writes). The woman now faces charges for destruction of property. Damage to the room and the two busts — of Christopher Columbus and Amerigo Vespucci — was put at \$1,000 (£600).

Plane crash bodies found

Spinboldak, Afghanistan: Taleban fighters and Pakistani rescue teams collected the remains of 51 people killed when an Afghan aircraft came down at night in the remote Khojak Pass area of Pakistan's Baluchistan province. The remains were flown to Kandahar by helicopter. The Antonov plane had crashed after a long search for a landing site during storms, and may have run out of fuel. (Reuters)

Sheikh seeks British care

Gaza: Sheikh Ahmed Yassin, the ailing spiritual leader of Hamas, the Islamic Resistance Movement, says he may try to enter Britain for surgery. The Palestinian cleric, whose movement has killed scores of Israelis, said in an interview at his home in Gaza City that, before he made a decision, he would send his medical records to supporters in Britain to establish whether a hospital could treat him. (Reuters)

Hashish air hostess jailed

Sharjah: A United Arab Emirates court confirmed a four-year jail sentence, the maximum punishment, for Julia Alexander, 25, an Emirates Airline hostess convicted of smoking hashish. Alexander, an Australian, who said she took the drug before returning to the UAE, was convicted last June but appealed in October. Officials said it was an offence for a resident even if the drug were used abroad. (AFP)

Poligans fact-track court World Cup
party angered to newspaper
backfired
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not

Ode to little bundles of joy

New York: If Georgia's Governor has his way, babies in the southern American state will grow up with Beethoven (Tunku Varadarajan writes). Zell Miller is so convinced that early exposure to music of the great masters makes children brighter that he intends to give all parents of the state's newborn a compact disc or cassette tape of classical music. Funds set aside to meet the cost are buried in his 1998 budget proposal. Georgia's musical experiment is expected to cost \$105,000 (£64,500) annually. Mr Miller told Georgia's legislature "Research shows that having an infant listen to classical music helps brain connections to develop, especially the ones related to mathematics and engineering." Beethoven's *Ode To Joy* is the only piece earmarked so far. It is a favourite of Mr Miller, who admits, however, that he prefers country or pop.

Iraq blocks UN over 'human guinea pigs'

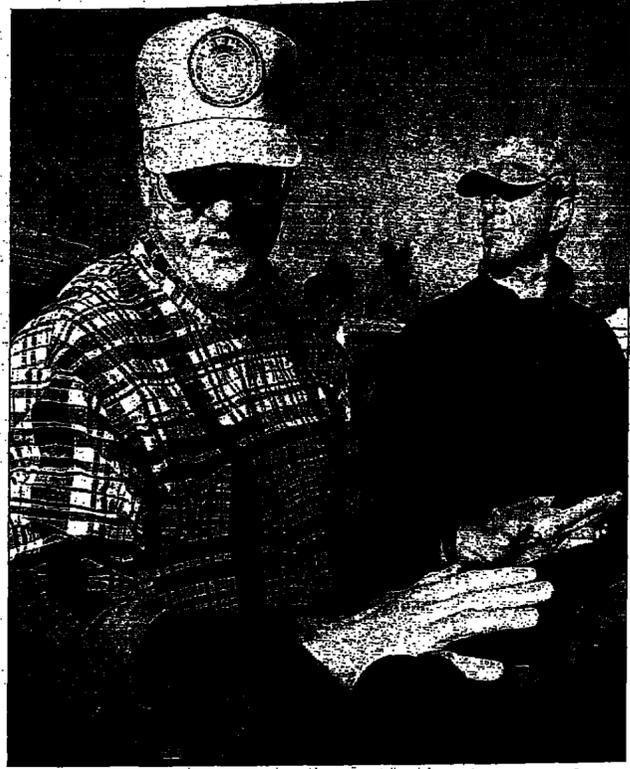
FROM JAMES BONE IN NEW YORK AND MICHAEL THEODOULOU IN NICOSIA

THE United Nations weapons inspection team, which is once again being obstructed by Iraq, had been checking intelligence reports that prisoners from a high-security jail outside Baghdad were used as "human guinea pigs" for experiments with biological and chemical weapons. UN inspectors believe the prisoners were taken from the notorious Abu Ghraib prison, about 40 miles west of Baghdad, between June and August 1995. A UN team led by Gabriele Kraatz-Wadsack, a German biological weapons expert, visited the prison on Monday and found that documents covering the period in question were missing. Abu Ghraib was on a list of seven sites that the UN inspectors started to visit before Iraq halted their work on Monday because of the presence of Scott Ritter, the American mission chief and a former US Marine major, whom Baghdad has denounced as a spy. Nizar Hamdoun, the Iraqi Ambassador to the UN, categorically denied Iraqi involvement in human testing,

insisting the allegations were a US-British ploy to deceive the Security Council. Madeleine Albright, the US Secretary of State, renewed warnings that a military response against Iraq had not been ruled out should it continue to obstruct the UN mission but Russia insisted that "any use of force is unacceptable". Mr Ritter, who has scorned Iraqi allegations that he is a CIA agent, said the 41-strong UN inspection team included members from 14 different countries and emphasised that they had been chosen for their

technical and scientific expertise. "Again I want to highlight that this is not an issue of an individual or a group of individuals, but rather a case of an inspection team trying to do its job," he said, adding that his team represented "the entire spectrum of inspection capability". The UN has long suspected that Iraq, which produced huge quantities of deadly anthrax and botulinum toxin, had tested these biological weapons on political prisoners or captured Kurdish or Iranian fighters. It is known to have tested biological weap-

ons on animals ranging from laboratory mice to donkeys. Sir John Weston, the British Ambassador at the UN, said that reports of the use of humans in biological weapons testing "extremely disturbing" and pressed for a strong statement demanding Iraqi co-operation with the UN's effort to find its suspected arsenal of weapons of mass destruction. Russia, which is owed billions of dollars by Iraq that cannot be repaid until the UN oil embargo is lifted, took Baghdad's side in closed-door discussions in the UN Security Council, seeking to dilute wording proposed by Britain and the United States. It was aided in this effort by France, which is hoping to handle the bulk of Iraq's oil when it comes on to the open market again. The Security Council duly issued a relatively weak statement "deploring" Iraq's refusal to co-operate with Mr Ritter before Richard Butler, the chief UN weapons inspector, travels to Baghdad at the weekend for talks.



Scott Ritter, head of the UN weapons inspection team, in Baghdad yesterday

British pressure stays

London: Britain will maintain a military presence in the Gulf region to keep pressure on President Saddam Hussein, said George Robertson, the Defence Secretary (Michael Evans writes). He told MPs it was the decision to send the aircraft carrier, *HMS Invincible*, to the Mediterranean to be on standby for the Gulf which

had helped to force the Iraqi leader to back down when he had refused to allow American inspectors into Baghdad. Appearing before the Commons Defence Committee, Mr Robertson said that *HMS Invincible*, another Royal Navy carrier, would be leaving for the Mediterranean from Portsmouth on Monday to replace *HMS Invincible*.

EU offers security aid in Middle East

FROM CHRISTOPHER WALKER IN JERUSALEM

DEREK FATCHETT, the Foreign Office Minister, last night launched a new European Union initiative on the Middle East by offering concrete security co-operation to both Israel and the Palestinians. Mr Fatchett said that his offer of "any technical assistance" was made first to Benjamin Netanyahu, the Israeli Prime Minister who he met in Jerusalem, and will be repeated today in talks with Yasser Arafat, the Palestinian leader, in Hebron. The town was yesterday the scene of violent clashes between Arabs and Israeli troops. Speaking on behalf of the British presidency of the EU, Mr Fatchett said that the EU assistance could help to overcome "years" that not enough is being done to prevent the Islamic terrorism that has repeatedly sabotaged moves towards more effective peace talks. Mr Fatchett, beginning a 48-hour tour designed to signal the priority Britain will give to Middle East peace during its six-month EU presidency, would not spell out in detail the offer being made. But these are understood to involve personnel on the ground from MI6 and other European secret services. In

recent months the CIA has begun playing a significant role in the flagging peace process, helping to devise ways of assessing whether Mr Arafat is living up to promises to crack down on Islamic Jihad and Hamas, the Islamic Resistance Movement. Equipment which could be offered to the Palestinians include sophisticated surveillance devices to help the Palestinian security forces to keep tabs on the activities of Hamas guerrillas. In the past the EU has been widely viewed in Israel as favouring the Palestinian cause, especially in the initiatives put forward by the French Government. Diplomats said that last night's move by Britain was designed to "secure the balance" while still remaining critical of the Israeli Government's expansionist settlement policy.

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The Aussies don't just shear sheep, they also clip kangaroos. G'day guys. We've been on the road for 39 hours now, non stop. No-one wants to pull over because we're making good time and well ahead of schedule at the moment, so we're taking turns to sleep in the Ritz (the back seat). The powerful front spotlights on the Frontera are proving their use, night-time driving can be a real strain on the eyes. Only problem is that the local kangaroo population are drawn to headlamps. We're constantly having to swerve to avoid them. Apart from the odd marsupial to break up the boreops, there's nothing but infinity stretching away into the distance everywhere you look. Cheers. We'll contact you again as we get near Sydney.

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مركزنا الأول

Babies need folic acid



Dr Thomas Stuttford reports on the benefits of taking folic acid before conception, drugs for blood pressure, the pain-relieving properties of red chillies, and how Parkinson's disease is affecting the Pope

Listening to radio and television serials has recently been like eavesdropping on an antenatal clinic. Kate, of *The Archers*, is pregnant; she claims that the baby's father is one of the eco-warriors from the bypass protest rather than Roy, her boyfriend. Bianca, in *EastEnders*, decided to have an abortion when tests showed that her baby had spina bifida. And, not to be outdone, there was an early pregnancy in the *Emmerdale* storyline.

Kate is pleased to be pregnant but the authors of *The Archers* have failed to emphasise the message that if Kate was not to risk the same fate as Bianca, she and all other women who might become pregnant should have been taking folic acid regularly. Without additional folic acid before conception (taken in the form of tablets), women are not doing all they might to avoid having a baby with spina bifida or other related central nervous system defects. Folic acid may also reduce the incidence of hare-lip, cleft palate and other facial deformities.

As Kate is a back-to-nature environmentalist, she would probably have preferred to have relied on a natural diet rich in folic acid to keep spina bifida at bay. However, a lifetime of healthy eating will not provide enough of this vitamin to give the additional protection that babies need. Fortifying the diet, whether by adding folic acid to breakfast cereals or even bread, is valuable but it is not adequate

in itself. To wait until a pregnancy is confirmed before taking folic acid tablets may be to wait too long.

Dr John Noakes, of Harrow, has recently reviewed pre-natal screening and the diagnosis of foetal diseases for the journal *Update*. Adequate rest, folic acid tablets, good nutrition, no cigarettes and no more than a modest intake of alcohol, will give the baby the best chance of being of opti-

All women hoping to become pregnant should take the tablets

mum size and of avoiding a congenital abnormality. But even if all the standard precautions are taken, a very small proportion of babies, between 2 and 3 per cent, will have a significant defect.

The means of detecting congenital abnormalities at an early stage are constantly improving. Tests are available for those women who are considered to be at risk of having a child affected by some particular problem because of their age, medical history or family history, such as Down's syndrome.

Screening by means of blood tests can be offered to a

wider cross-section, but Dr Noakes reports that only about half the pregnant women in England and Wales are being screened. In some hospitals only women over 35 are routinely screened, but younger ones may be included in some instances if they insist.

The triple blood test detects an increased risk of Down's syndrome. Three different biochemical readings — the alpha foetal protein, the human chorionic gonadotrophin and oestrol level — pick up 60 per cent of cases. Alpha foetal protein levels are also altered if the baby has spina bifida, allied diseases of the nervous system and, to a lesser extent, in other non-neurological disorders.

Ultrasound has revolutionised pre-natal diagnosis and it has also made such invasive techniques as amniocentesis and chorionic villus sampling (CVS), in which cells are taken from the placenta in order to analyse the chromosomes, much easier. As techniques have become more refined, so the number of diseases that can be diagnosed by it increase. Most women have at least one ultrasound examination during their pregnancy, usually after the 18th week.

Amniocentesis is carried out between the 16th and 20th week detects Down's syndrome and other chromosomal abnormalities. The procedure carries a 1 in 200 risk of inducing a miscarriage. The alternative procedure, CVS, can be done earlier but is associated with a 1 in 50 miscarriage rate. There is also



The big picture: ultrasound examinations have revolutionised pre-natal diagnosis

a suggestion that it may occasionally damage the unborn baby's limbs.

More recently, cordocentesis, examination of blood from the umbilical cord while the baby is still in the uterus, and foetoscopy, in which the baby is viewed in the uterus and samples collected, have been introduced but neither has as yet an application for most pregnant women.

A red hot healer

RED chillies are rich in flavonoids, health-giving antioxidant compounds, but too large a mouthful produces such a burning sensation that it is akin to pain. No amount of beer or water seems to ease the discomfort, which disappears only with time.

The chemical responsible, for the chilli's taste and effect is capsaicin. The pain receptors in the mouth gradually become immune so that regular chilli eaters can manage more and more of them as the sensitive pain fibres of the nerves are destroyed.

Capsaicin is a herbal remedy with an analgesic effect. It is used to treat the pain of arthritis and post-herpetic neuralgia (the pain after shingles). Research is under way to see if capsaicin can be

neutralised to treat other forms of intractable pain.

Drugs prescribed to treat the pain brought on by chronic inflammatory diseases account for one in five of all NHS prescriptions. They are essential to some patients, but they are more damaging to their gastro-intestinal tract than too much chilli.

NSAIDs (non-steroidal anti-inflammatory drugs) are an important cause of gastro-intestinal bleeding but new anti-inflammatory drugs, which are able to ease the pain in the joints without depriving the gut of protective prostaglandins which hasten gastro-intestinal healing, will soon become available. These COX2 drugs will make many of the existing anti-arthritis drugs obsolete.

Hope for the Pope

THE health of Pope John Paul II continues to cause concern, but the recent alarm caused by his well-publicised stumble, which was interpreted as a near faint, would seem to be unnecessary.

The Pope has apparently made a good recovery from his unexplained abdominal problems and he now looks better than he did a year or two ago. In particular, the investigative surgery that he underwent showed that his symptoms were not related to his earlier cancer of the colon.

The commentators who expressed alarm about his apparent near-collapse noticed that he had faltered and then stumbled while

officiating at a service. At the time one of his aides quickly stepped forward, held his arm to support him and, thereafter, the Pope carried on as usual.

Examination of the film of the incident shows that this anxiety about the pontiff's health was misplaced. He suffers from Parkinson's disease, and, as a result, has a marked shake affecting one side of his body. People suffering from this condition tend to lean forward as they walk, pause unexpectedly and then are slow to get moving again. And once they do, they often walk with a shuffling gait and may look as though they are about to topple forwards.

Heart drug that reduces side-effects

Any drug that makes some people's feet so swollen that the soft tissue spreads over the tops of their shoes, and gives them a face so red that even the local minister's wife takes on the ruddy glow of a hunting squire, is likely to be viewed by patients with some suspicion.

These side-effects, together with headaches and constipation, occurred with the original short-acting calcium antagonists, used in the treat-

ment of high blood pressure and angina.

They were inconvenient, but as the drugs seemed otherwise safe, they were accepted by most patients particularly as the symptoms of headache and constipation usually subsided. Later, more extensive re-

search showed that one group of short-acting calcium antagonists, the dihydropyridines such as nifedipine, were splendid at bringing blood pressure down, but rather than prolonging life there seemed to be an association with an earlier death, and an increased incidence of coronary thrombosis. The scientists who produced the report emphasised that the case against the short-acting nifedipine was not proven, but even so it was enough to prevent me from prescribing it, or taking it.

The same analysis showed that the long-acting forms of nifedipine were effective and

there was no suspicion that they caused any adverse side-effects. Scientists working in Switzerland on calcium antagonists discovered by chance that one preparation they were investigating, Posicor (mibefradil, acted in a different way from other calcium channel blockers.

There are two types of cardiovascular calcium pathway, the T and the L. The standard calcium antagonists block the L channels but

Posicor, unlike them, predominantly blocks the T channels. Consequently, it has a different effect on blood pressure and heart rate.

It lowers blood pressure, reduces the heart rate and relieves angina, but only very occasionally causes a flushed face or swollen legs. Tests

to date have shown that Posicor has no more side-effects than a placebo.

Posicor can be used very effectively by itself, or in conjunction with other heart drugs, such as ACE inhibitors and beta-blockers. As Posicor slows the heart, care needs to be taken when it is given in conjunction with beta-blockers, which also have this effect. Posicor increases the power of two drugs, simvastatin, better known as Zocor, and cyclosporin. Patients taking simvastatin should be changed to another one of the statin group of drugs if they are prescribed Posicor.

'Swollen feet and red faces are viewed with some suspicion'

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هكزان الأول

HOW ONE AMERICAN FAMILY, OUTRAGED BY THEIR COUNTRY'S FOREIGN POLICY, DECIDED TO DO SOMETHING ABOUT IT

Thank you for life, said Trinh

In an extract from her book, *Children in Exile*, Thekla Clark tells of her first meeting with the dispossessed Du Cau family

I was in the middle of a stormy November in 1979 when we drove the few miles from our house along the deserted, twisting road to Lincontro — a 16th-century monastery whose name means 'The Meeting'. Legend has it that Saint Dominic met and lovingly embraced Saint Francis here, a popular subject for Renaissance painters. On a clear day there is a splendid view of the valley of the Arno with the city like a Renaissance painting in the background. A row of cypresses, black against a tempestuous sky, marked the beginning of the monastery. We parked the car and walked towards the only light in view, which came from a square, newish building attached to the renovated church. There was no answer to our knock but the door was unlocked so we stepped into an icy corridor, dimly lit but freshly painted. As we walked along we heard noises, noises like spring rain that grew louder, but never loud.

Following our ears we came to a large dining room and identified the sound. It was the sound of Asian laughter, which I would come to recognise as a heaven to almost any conversation: embarrassment, doubt, complication, difficulty, bewilderment, mortification and of

course, joy, were all expressed in that gentle laughter. There were, I learnt through the Orientals' moments in which laughter is less callous or heartless than tears.

In the refectory were about 20 Vietnamese of all ages in the middle of an Italian lesson. The teacher, a pretty girl in blue jeans, was as amused and delighted as her pupils. A substantial man, who looked, except for his surname, like my local butcher, came over to us. It was Don Luigi [the man in charge of all the Asian refugees in Tuscany]. After the ritual exchange of compliments (considerably briefer than usual) he introduced us to 'our family'. Tuyen, the father, was fairly tall, incredibly thin with lank pitch-black hair and the dirty-beige pallor that comes from lack of food. His wife, Trinh, who seemed little more than a child, looked even thinner and her delicate face was tense and strained.

Tuyen threw his arms around John [her husband] in an awkward but deeply moving gesture and buried his head on

John's shoulder. We were all surprised, including Tuyen himself. All except Don Luigi who had, he rather condescendingly told us later, the 'advantages of The Fa: n.' Everyone in the room joined with the general delight and the room itself seemed to rock with Asian laughter.

I had felt like a spectator looking through the keyhole but suddenly the doors were flung wide open and Trinh and I kissed unselfconsciously. Trinh knew a few words of English, enough to say 'Thank you for life.' What one answers to that I still don't know. Their smiles and laughter made an answer unnecessary.

We went upstairs to a tiny cell-like room where our third unit, a baby as pale and fragile as a piece of old

porcelain, slept with his hands above his head in what I knew from my own children to be the ideal position for tranquil rest. A born baby-snatcher, I left the room with a reluctance that Trinh understood immediately.

Our expressions of genuine delight were cut short by Don Luigi who took John aside and said, 'Now what about this job?' I began to feel as though we were trying to join an exclusive club whose membership was already oversubscribed. I found myself apologising for our simple arrangements but was interrupted by John who is not an easy man to rattle. In his flawless Italian, he convinced Don Luigi of our good intentions.

Don Luigi was too much of a Tuscan to

express approval and certainly not optimism. A proper Tuscan when asked 'How are you?' answers 'Non c'è male' (not too bad) or if he is feeling exceptionally well, 'Bene per ora' meaning all right for now. Whether it was the general atmosphere or John's impeccable accent, I don't know but Don Luigi seemed satisfied enough.

After expressions of affection all round and one more look at the baby, we left, promising to return in a week (health controls were necessary) to collect 'our' new family and take them home. On the way back John and I kept laughing and congratulating each other, passing our euphoria back and forth as though it were some detectable dish or precious wine. When we got home we each took a sniff drink to sober up.

The move itself was simple as their possessions were few. Their 11-month stay on the infamous Malaysian island of Pulau Bidong had meant that what few valuables they brought with them had disappeared. Ostensibly a haven for

refugees, by all accounts Pulau Bidong was more like a concentration camp: the refugees were confined, half-starved and brutalised by Malaysian guards. Fortunately Trinh had been able to nurse the baby who was only four months old when they left Vietnam. The baby's two lost all their teeth and quite a bit of hair from malnutrition.

There are those who believe that sleep is the great healer: I hold with those who favour proper food. We were able to provide both. Recovery came remarkably quickly. The baby was enchanting. When he first came to us he was 15 months old and not only could he not walk, he didn't even have strength enough to sit up. His fontanelle was not closed and he had no muscular control over his eyes. This was due to malnutrition.

A friend who is a doctor later told me that, had the baby remained on the island in those conditions, within another three or four months he could have been permanently brain damaged. Instead, within three months he was everywhere, a golden, dimpled delight with even one eye straightened out.

CHRIS WARDE-JONES

An open door to love and care

Thekla Clark is a handsome woman in her late sixties with a fondness for very good poets. It was through her friendship with one of these, James Fenton, whom she has known since he was an undergraduate, that she and her husband, John, found themselves taking into their home a family of Vietnamese boat people in 1979. Two years later they took in the survivors of a large Cambodian family, most of whom had perished under the Khmer Rouge.

In the 1970s James Fenton, now Professor of Poetry at Oxford, was a newspaper correspondent in South-East Asia. He discussed the situation there with the Clarks who, being American, felt 'bound' to America by citizenship, blood ties, tradition and a strong love and, at the same time, 'outraged and diminished by US foreign policy'.

'We were ashamed,' says Thekla when I meet her. 'And there was nothing we could think of to do... The Clarks themselves were exiles, albeit by choice. Shortly after the Second World War they had each travelled to Italy: John from Albany, Georgia, to study art history in Florence, and Thekla on a three-month holiday from which she did not return. Why did she not go back?'

'Have you ever been to Oklahoma City?' demands Thekla, who is given to answering questions with other questions. She has brought

Thekla Clark came to Tuscany as a widow. There she met W. H. Auden, remarried, and took in two families of Asian refugees. Interview by Jane Shilling

with her to the interview her Chato, publicist, Jemima, in case I turn out to be 'frightening'. Jemima is young, pretty and intelligent. It takes me roughly one minute to realise that, actually, she is there in case I turn out to be a trashing bore.

No, I say, I haven't been to Oklahoma City. Well, says Thekla, if I had, I would at once realise why it was that after landing at Naples she never looked back. There is more. Before leaving the States, she had been studying to be an actress at the Actors' Lab, where she met a girl called Marilyn Monroe and was active in left-wing politics. Was she a Communist? 'I would have been, but they wouldn't have me. I talked too much.'

She married a fellow actor, but when their daughter, Lisa, was six months old her husband was killed by a hit-and-run driver. And so, in 1951, a 24-year-old widow with a tiny baby, she set off towards what

was to prove a new life. In Italy she fell in love — with the country and the people. And she also fell in friendship. The poet Anthony Hecht introduced her to W.H. Auden and his lover, Chester Kallman, and there began an attachment that ended only with Auden's death.

A happy life, in a comfortable house in Tuscany, among congenial people... but idylls decay. With their children grown, the house feeling large and empty, the news from South-East Asia grim, US foreign policy a source

of chagrin, the Clarks decided they must act. Or perhaps 'decided' is not the word.

'We acted on impulse. I suppose we wanted to be good.' Good? I say, thinking it an odd turn of phrase for such a dauntingly sophisticated woman. 'Most people want to be good,' says Thekla. 'No one wants to be wicked, no one wants to be average. It is much rather to be good, wouldn't you? Er, I say, rather hopelessly.'

Was God anything to do with this? 'He's something to do with everything, isn't he?' says Thekla, still answering a question with a question.

Their impulse to be good took John Clark to a public meeting called by the Italian charity Caritas. Which was how, some months later, the Clarks found themselves summoned to collect the Du Cau family: Tuyen, his wife, Trinh, and their baby son, Bo.

Dispossessed, undernourished, incarcerated in a Malaysian refugee camp in conditions of extreme squalor, the Du Caus had, nevertheless, two pieces of relative good fortune: the family survived intact, and were young enough to be resilient. With proper food and sleep, a house to live in, a job for Tuyen and human warmth, the Du Caus settled, blossomed, even ceased to see themselves as exiles.

They had been with the Clarks a year when James Fenton came again to visit. In a refugee camp on the Thai-Cambodian frontier he had met Samreth: Khul, a young boy whose charm and cleverness had impressed the poet. Here, too, surely, was someone who might benefit from the help the Clarks could offer, if only he could be traced.

Eventually, there came a message. The Khul family would be arriving at Rome airport at 6am on Thursday, February 19, 1981.

The Khul family — Samreth, 16, his mother, Sary, his sister, Kilen, 14, and brother, Houssara, 8 — were quite a different proposition. They had experienced such atrocities — every possible affront to human dignity and tenderness — that even to read Thekla's description of them in *Children in Exile* is almost unbearable. What could have been the legacy of such experiences? And how on earth could the Clarks begin to repair it? Gracefully though the process appears to have been accomplished, and however success-

ful the outcome — all the family members now live independent lives — I could not begin to comprehend how it had been done.

Surely, I hazard, the only thing more difficult than being the powerless recipient of charity is to be the person benevolently administering it. This kind of self-consciousness gets absolutely nowhere with Thekla, whose account of the relationship with the Khuls makes it sound not easy, but somehow effortless, like falling in love, or nurturing a child.

The first thing that struck her about them, she writes, was their beauty and delicacy. Then there was their remarkable charm and talent, particularly Samreth, who was a gifted artist and would have had a hand smashed by a Khmer gun butt.

But what, I ask, if you had had a family you didn't like? Ugly, charmless, deceitful, disturbed? 'Didn't think about it,' says Thekla. Perhaps you were determined to like them. I say, 'Do you have children?' asks Thekla. Then she answers her own question: 'No.' 'Yes!' I say, stung. 'Well,' she says, 'when you have a baby, you have a baby, don't you? You don't say, "Oh, God, his eyes are crossed!"'

But, I say, you must have



Thekla Clark with Houssara Khul, now 23, one of the four Cambodians she took into her home near Florence in 1981

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felt that you were treading on an emotional minefield. Crikey, if these had been English children, you would not have been able to get in the door for all the social workers and counsellors and special-needs advisers. 'We had problems. We had rows, the same as any children,' says Thekla. 'But when there is so much to do, you don't have that much time to think of it. You should know this,' she adds, briskly.

Well, yes and no. The Clarks belong to a generation that brought up its children first, and asked questions later, assuming moral authority with a certainty that seems enviable to my own, more vacillating generation. But there is a good deal more than mere generational bossiness to the extraordinary sense of confidence in what they were doing that rises from the pages of *Children in Exile*. The Happy Ever After ending is prosaic enough: Sary, Kilen and Samreth moved to America, where Sary and Kilen became fundamentalist members of the Voice of Pentecost church. Kilen works as a dental hygienist; Samreth studied art, but now employs his remarkable charm selling cars. Houssara remained in Italy and became a computer whiz-kid.

But there is something about the whole story that you can only call, for want of a better word, magical. Not in Thekla's telling of it, from which whimsy and sentimentality are absent. Perhaps it is her passionate belief in the power of love and friendship. Or perhaps it is what comes of mixing with very good poets.

Children in Exile by Thekla Clark is published by Chatto & Windus on January 22, £12.99. Times readers can buy a copy for £11.99 by calling The Times Bookshop on 0990 134 431

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Why Britain needs a new welfare state

Tony Blair outlines the boldest benefits shake-up since Beveridge

Today at a meeting in the West Midlands I want to begin a national debate about how we modernise the welfare state. Not whether, but how.

My aim is to build a consensus behind the need for reform. It will mean tough decisions, like taking £3.5 billion from the utilities to tackle structural long-term unemployment — an indication of how serious we are.

Some say the task is too difficult, so why risk the unpopularity? I say that the human cost of the failings in the current system is too high to do nothing. Why should a mother have to stay at home when she wants to work, simply because she has no childcare and is trapped on benefits? Why should more than one million poor pensioners, entitled to income support, not get it? What kind of system leaves four million children living in poverty?

Welfare is not working. There is more poverty and social division as well as a growing cost to ordinary taxpayers. Today we are publishing a set of focus files that spell out the facts and underline the need for reform. The welfare state costs each family about £80 a week. We spend more on social security than we do on education, employment, health and law and order combined. We spend more on disability and incapacity benefits than we do on the entire school system in the UK. Benefit fraud, estimated at £4 billion a year, is enough to build 100 new hospitals.

For too many the system is simply not doing the job it was set up to do. And it's not surprising. You don't expect to buy the same model of TV or car as 50 years ago. You don't expect to take as long to fly across the world. Why should you expect a welfare state created 50 years ago to be tailored to your needs today? More women now work. Most people change jobs at least six or seven times in their career. People live longer, in some cases for 30 years after retirement. More marriages end in divorce. These are big changes in the way we live. The welfare state must adapt to them.

I want to build a new architecture for a system that, like Beveridge's in 1945, successfully tackled poverty, and provides security and opportunity at points in your life when you need it most. Our changes will be based on principle, and though the system of 1945 is not working as we would like in 1997, the principles are the same. Just as new Labour in opposition was about putting traditional values in a modern setting, so is the reform of welfare in government.

First, those in genuine need will always be helped and supported by a Labour government. That is my guarantee. Second, anyone of working age who can work should work. Work, for those that can work, is in our view the best form of welfare. It provides financial independence, a network of contacts, and dignity. So those who have in the past been excluded from job opportunities, such as lone parents or the disabled, many of whom can work and want to work, will

be given the chance to do so. Third, we believe in the responsibility of individuals to help provide for themselves where they can do so.

And we will build on these principles. Our welfare state will root out fraud wherever it is found. It will be based on a partnership between public and private sectors. It will be about providing services and not just cash. That is behind the New Deal welfare to work programme, the biggest ever attempt on long term and youth unemployment. The pilots have begun. It will go nationwide in April. It is the key building block of our welfare reform plans for this Parliament. I am determined to make it work.

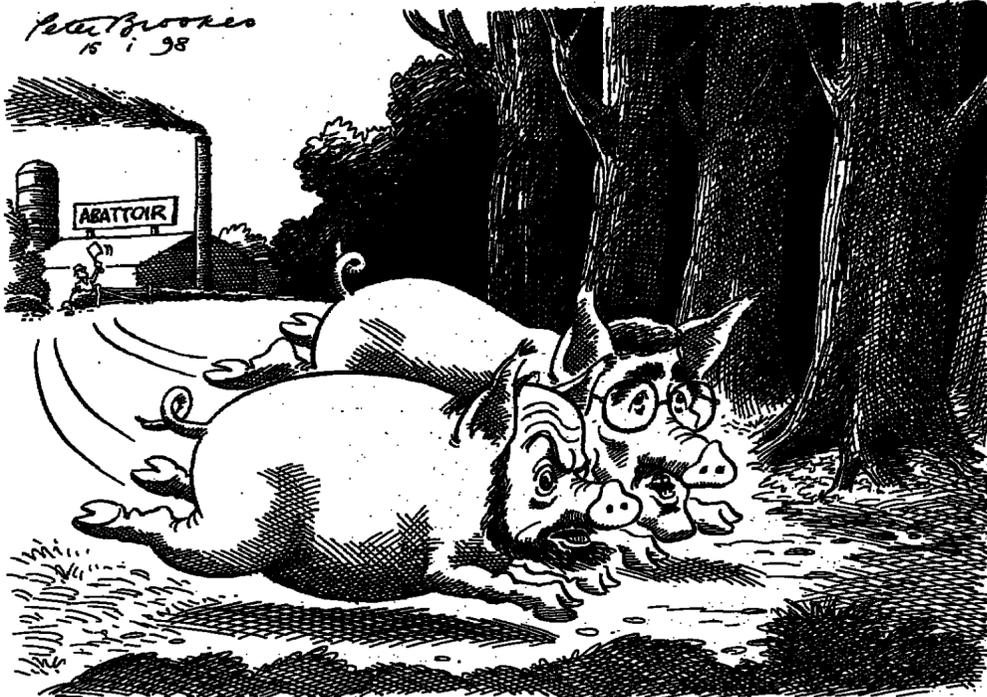
But I am beginning to see why most politicians tend to steer clear of welfare. Most of the changes are long-term. On pensions any reforms will take two Parliaments and more to come into effect. Other reforms, even if begun soon, will only yield savings in several years' time. Most politicians are fonder of measures that prove instant success, preferably attached to votes.

I am acutely aware that this is a very sensitive area. To many people benefits are a lifeline and work is not an option. That is why any changes will be made in consultation with those who rely on benefits so that we ensure support and protection for those most in need. I will not be put off by scare stories in the papers. The reason for going out as I am today, to talk to the people, is to make sure they see the scare stories for what they are. A government that is working on policy options combined with journalists sometimes unwilling to wait for the outcome is always going to be a recipe for wild press speculation. There is nothing I can do about that other than promise that when we put forward our plans they will be the result of serious work, consideration and consultation.

This Government will listen. But let nobody underestimate my determination to see this through. I am embarking on this programme of reform because I believe it is central to the modernisation of Britain and the building of a decent society in which everyone has the chance to play their part, no matter what their background. If the rewards come in the next century, with the welfare state put on a sound, modern footing for future generations, then it will have been worth the controversy.

When I look at the welfare state I don't see a pathway out of poverty, a route into work or a gateway to dignity in retirement. I see a dead end for too many people. I want to clear the way to a new system. The status quo is not an option.

Long-term, thought-out, principled reform is the way forward. The aim is to relieve poverty, narrow social division, extend opportunity and security and spend taxpayers' money wisely. I believe that the people I meet tonight and the rest of the country will be able to sign up to those objectives and help us to carry them out for the benefit of Britain.



TWO PORKERS ESCAPE THE CHOP...

Beware the grey vote

Young politicians in a hurry should think twice about cutting state pensions — the old will see it as a breach of contract

For many professional people retirement is a long stretch. Take, for instance, the tens of thousands of men and women who have been persuaded by the clearing banks to take early retirement. Since 1985 most customers have said goodbye to more than one bank manager, who has put a good face on it, and said he is looking forward to being able to play more golf, or that he hopes to pick up some work locally. He, or she, does not say what the pay-off has been, but it usually includes a lump sum, an early retirement pension and, perhaps, a car that went with the manager's job.

This has not just been the experience of bank staff, but of all those middle-class people who have suffered from the "downscaling" of businesses, whether they were in professional or management positions. Many of those who retire early do not get redundancy terms as favourable as those of the banks, but even to the relatively lucky ones, it has often been a depressing experience. There is not all that much local consultancy work for people in their fifties. The retirement income may be enough for a quiet life, but it is well below the income that had been expected. The car breaks down and there are unforeseen bills to pay. Old age looms ahead.

Now there is a new threat. The Government is planning to reform the welfare system, and is going to "think the unthinkable". One of the unthinkable thoughts that has been leaked would be to reduce the old age pension for those above a certain income level. At first, the retired professional probably thinks it would be absurd to include him among the fat cats who are going to lose their pension. Surely "the affluent" means Lord Hanson or someone like that, not someone who now finds Christmas presents for the grandchildren are becoming a small financial strain. But bank managers are numerate. They soon work out that there are not enough Lord Hansons to make much difference. If the state pension bill is to be cut significantly, the cut-off level will have to be set where it will hurt the middle class.

Then he, or she, may start to feel angry. Perhaps he joined the bank when he was 20 — they usually did in those days. That would be in the early 1950s, when he had finished his National Service. He paid national insurance from his first week to his

last week in the bank. He planned his retirement in the expectation that the state pension would chip in as a useful extra amount in the late 1990s when he would reach the age of 65.

Of course, that will still happen, but he wonders if it will be maintained when welfare reform comes into effect. Taxes were pretty heavy throughout his working life, even apart from national insurance. The manager may have been earning good money in his last years at the bank, but had never been able to save much. The big income tax cut in Nigel Lawson's Budget only came in 1988: that was about the time that he retired. The state pension is already taxed, so wealthier pensioners are already means-tested relative to poorer pensioners. There seems to be little or no resentment about that. But the retired do regard national insurance as a contract. They paid quite substantial sums out of their working lives. They did not have the option to use that money to buy a pension from an ordinary life assurance company. The idea that they might now get a reduced pension, or no pension at all, strikes them as a breach of their national insurance contract. They see it as downright fraud.

The trouble is that the national insurance system in Britain has never been paid into a fund, as it is in Singapore. What has happened is that each generation of taxpayers has had to pay the previous generation's pension. When the retired bank manager was paying his highest taxes and national insurance contribution, which would have been in the 1960s, the Government was spending the money. It was helping to finance the pensions of those who had been born in the first quarter of the century. The money has gone; it no longer exists. The pensions of the old are still being paid out of the taxes of the middle aged.

The problem of pension reform is not the division between rich and poor, between people of high and low incomes. If that were all, it would be relatively easy to tax the richest to support the poorest, and to stop making transfer payments from one middle income family to another. These middle-class transfer payments now make up more than half the cost. The difficulty is that the payments are transfers between age groups, and the State has contractual obligations to the older age group arising from transfers that were made a generation ago. The old have ceased earning and have high disability, health and pension costs. They are the lowest contributors to the welfare system and by far the largest claimants. This chain of transfers between the generations cannot be broken in any short period of time: indeed as the British population is ageing it will tend to become more burdensome, with fewer middle-aged taxpayers supporting more pensioners.

The only fair way in which the transfers can be reduced is by building a new generation that has sufficient savings to pay for its own retirement. Such savings must be fully funded and not merely nominal claims on the State. If this were achieved, most people would eventually reach retirement with sufficient savings for them not to need further state support. Even on the most optimistic projection, that could only be reached in a generation's time.

Savings policy and welfare policy must be made to work together. The reason one cannot fully trust this Government on welfare reform is that it has so far been an anti-savings Government. The reform of advanced corporation tax took money from the pension funds. The abolition of age relief on private health insurance made it harder for the old to provide for their own healthcare. The proposed capital limit of £50,000 on ISAs is absurdly low, and would

remain far too low even if it were doubled. An anti-savings Government cannot expect to get welfare reform right, because it refuses to help people to provide for their own old age.

There is a strong case for welfare reform, but it must be subject to two conditions. The first is that there should be no breach of contract. It is unfortunate that the welfare state was established on an unfunded basis: the Singapore system has proved much better. Yet the British system does have an implied contract to provide pensions to those who have paid their national insurance contributions. The second condition is that welfare reform, which is designed to reduce public expenditure, must be accompanied by lower taxes on savings.

From the Treasury point of view the old may be a nuisance; they cost a lot of money in pensions and health and they pay little tax, because they have mostly retired. There will always be a tendency for the Treasury to value people as economic producers, and devalue them when they cease to produce. The old are perfectly well aware of this, but naturally they resent it. They will resent it much more if they think that the Government is going to cut the pensions they have paid for.

The Treasury has found an ally in the "youthism" which has taken over both major political parties. If the young are the only group that matters, and the old are regarded simply as a burden, it seems natural to take money from pensions to spend it on education.

The "new" Labour Party has declared itself to be a party of the young; the Conservative Party has an even younger leader. The old find it hard to identify a single major politician who understands and cares for them, and would fight their corner. In the United States President Reagan, who was himself old, was very good at wooing this age group. The old have time to follow politics and tend to feel that voting is a civic duty. In Britain, the Labour Government seems to have distanced itself from the grey vote. Labour will alienate the old at their peril.

All politicians need to be reminded of the electoral arithmetic: those who have retired or are about to retire now amount to a third of all voters. Dad and Mum are a big army.

William Rees-Mogg

A Palace is no place for papists

Magnus Linklater on the sectarian Order of the Thistle

There is a senior and influential institution in Britain which seems to be exercising blatant discrimination against Roman Catholics. It has rigorously excluded Catholics from membership of one of its most coveted orders. While claiming to be modern in outlook and tolerant in attitude, it continues to apply standards which can only be described as sectarian. I refer to the Queen and the royal household.

I would imagine that the Queen is unaware of the facts, although the evidence is so compelling that I am surprised it has not come to her attention. I am certain that something should be done about it. It is, after all, 310 years since William of Orange came to the throne, and while we remain a Protestant nation, the anti-Catholic virus should by now have worked itself out of the national bloodstream.

The charge is this: that Britain's most ancient order of chivalry, whose members are appointed by the reigning monarch, and which recognises distinguished service to the nation, is a Protestant bastion, barred to Catholics. From what I can determine, the Order of the Thistle, Scotland's equivalent to the Garter, but more ancient in origin, has not, in more than 200 years, included a Catholic. I have combed the list, and, with one doubtful exception, which I will come to, the omission seems to me positively glaring. The exclusion of some recent and distinguished Catholic contenders has prompted one observer of the royal scene to comment scathingly that it should be renamed the "orange order".

One could argue that the Thistle hardly impinges on the mainstream of Scottish life. But at a time of delicate negotiation in Northern Ireland, symbols of tolerance or bias become all-important. "Should time-honoured traditions escape censure? The Most Ancient and Most Noble Order of the Thistle traces its roots back to medieval times. There is said to have been a reference to it at the coronation of Alexander III of Scotland in 1249, a hundred years before the Order of the Garter was established in England. Its direct history, and all the paraphernalia that goes with it — the magnificent green mantle in which its members are dressed, the Green Rod (equivalent of the Black Rod) which is carried in procession to St. Giles' Cathedral in Edinburgh, and the badges with their St. Andrew's Crosses — go back to James VII of Scotland and II of England, who reintroduced it in 1687. It was a way of rewarding his Catholic supporters.

A year later James was in exile in France, William of Orange was on the throne, and the Protestant tradition was in place. Since then, some 200 peers and 14 commoners have been appointed. Dukes, earls and marquesses predominate. Its members include the Duke of Buccleuch, Lord Mackay of Clashfern, Viscount Whitelaw and Lord Younger of Prestwick (the former Defence Secretary, George Younger). Of Catholics, there is little trace.

The one exception I can find is the Fourth Marquess of Bute in 1922. This was an appointment made on the recommendation of Lloyd George, under whom honours were notoriously traded. Russell Malloch, who has written an account of the order, to be published shortly by HMSO, found his appointment was a reward for pledging his newspapers to the support of Lloyd George as the honours scandal emerged.

There has been no lack of eligible Catholic contenders. Of those recently overlooked, the most obvious example is the late Lord Bute, whose contribution to Scottish public life was so great that on his death he was given no fewer than four memorial services. Lord Wheatley, who transformed the local government structure of Scotland, was never included. The present Earl of Perth, a former Minister of State, Crown Estate Commissioner, Chairman of the Ditchley Foundation and notable patron of the arts, has been omitted. The Marquess of Lothian, who represented Britain at the United Nations, the European Parliament and the Council of Europe, is another obvious absentee among the Scottish peerage. Extend the search further and the gaps are yawning.

I sought the views of the Lord Lyon King of Arms, the most senior member of the Queen's Household in Scotland and secretary of the order. His reply was unusually guarded. He said he had heard of the allegation but had never looked into it seriously. He was unaware that religion played any part in the Queen's decisions. Buckingham Palace said it was "pure coincidence" that no Catholic had been appointed during the Queen's reign. They added that her new Lord Chamberlain, Lord Canons, was a Catholic. Whatever the explanation, the time has come to challenge tradition.

I doubt if tribalism in high places should be allowed to survive, particularly with Scotland acquiring its own parliament. Nothing would get relations between that parliament and the monarchy off to a worse start than conflict over an issue such as this. If the Thistle is to retain its honourable position and title, it needs to become just a little less prickly.

Double dome

JUST when you thought you had heard all you ever wanted to know about the dome, bad news: we are to be given a second one. The fabulously rich Hinduja brothers are to finance a spectacular £100 million rival edifice after being snubbed in their attempt to link up with the Greenwich project. This could cause trickiness on the onion bhaji circuit where Peter Mandelson, minister without a dome, has struck up an unlikely friendship with the duo. Unlikely because the Hinduja's were very chummy with Margaret Thatcher and gave generously to the Tories. Since then, Mandelson has been seen with them at two recent parties, declaring the benefactors "friends of Labour". At the heart of the row is religion — which has dogged Mandelson who is under pressure to give the dome a Christian theme.



Gopi Hinduja and Mandelson

Sri and Gopi Hinduja's dome will be "an experience based on common traditions and differing cultures". A site in Peterborough has been found and, unlike the more expensive dome, plans for the rides are advanced. One attraction will transform the audience into "fiery images" onto a dome-shaped screen. "On reaching earth they become absorbed by a leaf and eaten by a human." With £1.1 billion in their Liquid Gold Saver accounts, the Indian-born tycoons are not to be deterred. "It is a gift to the people of the world," says Sri Hinduja. "Dome or no dome, the

● SPIRITS at Balmoral were rather less subdued in the days when



the late Kanga, Lady Tryon held court. "She seemed astonished that the Queen and the Duke of Edinburgh would take charge of the barbecue and the Queen would toss the salad," writes Tatler. One day, she squirted a soda siphon up the Duke's kilt. He retaliated by tipping all the contents of her cosmetics bags and her rollers into her bed.

Beef stew

AFTER escaping the tedious debate about British beef by joining a skiing trip to Switzerland, a group of MPs were forcefully reminded of the saga on the flight home. A young woman sitting next to some of the members became agitated when handed her in-flight feed. "This beef is raw. Take it away and bring me something else," she de-

manded. The Swissair steward informed her that there was nothing but beef on the menu. "That's outrageous. Get me the Chief Steward now." But he was unable to pacify the woman, even after he had pointed out that the meat was Swiss. She informed him that Swiss beef was responsible for more than 60 cases of CJD. "What makes you the expert?" he inquired. "My name is Sarah Creutzfeldt-Jakob and my grandfather discovered this disease." The MPs joined the in-flight beef boycott, and gloomily munched peanuts.

● WHILE Geoffrey Robinson prepares for tough Treasury questions, the minister with several portfolios might recall his presidential comments in Politics of Pressure in 1985. "Ministers are ground down by having to present and defend policies in which many of them just don't believe."

Club farce

FIRST it almost became a hamburger bar; now it has closed with massive debts. And it is all so terribly sad for Michael Porlillo. Century House was the HQ for the former Defence Secretary's failed attempt to retain his Enfield Southgate seat. In 1996 the Conservative Club tried to flog the building to



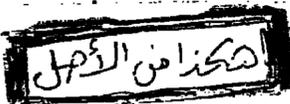
CHINA's fashionable dissident, Wci Jingsheng, has been given board and lodgings in Britain by Sing at his £2 million, 14-bedroom western cottage in Wiltshire. Before hopping on the Eurostar to Paris yesterday, he spent the week at Lake House, enjoying the sanctimony and sympathy of the rocker and his wife, Trudie. Conversation struggled. Wci doesn't speak English, so his interpreter had to join him round the dinner table.

McDonald's, sparking a big run-up. Porlillo was left with ketchup on his face when he failed to condemn the proposed £325,000 sale. Tory club chairman is David Robson, who sits on the party's national executive. "We have had problems with falling membership, like a lot of clubs," says Robson. "I owe the local association about £6,000. But they'll get their money eventually."



● KEN LIVINGSTONE in lively form — he told a hack from the Independent: "Judging by the decline of your paper, you seem to be no more economically competent than the Government." Then he ventured that Gordon Brown could cost Labour the election, adding: "Brown has wanted to be PM since he was cognitive."

JASPER GERARD





FOOD FOR THOUGHT

The point of a food agency is safer food and nothing else

From the wreckage of the BSE crisis and the recent record levels of food poisoning, a new Food Standards Agency is to emerge. Its task will be a huge one, for never has public confidence in the safety of food been lower. The solution embraced by the Government, set out in a White Paper yesterday, is to detach food standards and their enforcement from ministerial control and place them in the hands of a powerful agency, funded by the industry it will control. There is much to welcome in the White Paper, but it also raises serious concerns.

Certainly the system had to change. It has long been an anomaly that the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food was responsible simultaneously for promoting the food industry and for attempting to police it. Inevitably, promotion gained the upper hand, while the safety of food slipped. One disaster might have been accounted a misfortune, but a long series of them pointed to a structural flaw.

At the same time, the growth of fast food outlets and the decline of home economics in the schools have given infected food a much better chance of reaching the plate. A growing number of the bugs responsible are resistant to antibiotics, in part because those very antibiotics have been misused in animal husbandry. Treating outbreaks of food poisoning has thus become increasingly difficult. The case for reform is very strong.

Yet there must be doubts about the likely effectiveness of the new agency. The issues that matter are those of food safety, BSE, salmonella, campylobacter, and E. coli. There are worrying signs that even before it has started to function, the agency has been captured by the nutritionists, whose agenda is different and who argue that the long-term effects of poor diet multiply the risks of cancer or heart disease and cause many

more deaths than does food poisoning. This is a danger for the new system. The benefits of the latest healthy diet often prove elusive, and the target constantly shifts. The evidence seldom justifies the nannying tones in which advice is offered. There is a real danger that the work of the agency will be distorted, and its message blunted, by the ideology of healthy eating. This was the advice offered to government by the food industry, and by the Royal Society, but it has been ignored.

A second doubt concerns enforcement. It is one thing to establish standards — indeed, they already exist — but another to ensure they are enforced. If this is to remain the responsibility of local authorities, one of the weakest links in the present chain will remain in place. Environmental health officers do their best, but local authorities have many other priorities. To improve the system, it will be vital to prevent the money needed for monitoring from seeping out to other more politically tempting tasks.

The most controversial aspect of the proposals is likely to be the means of paying for them. Reluctant to find the £100 million needed to run the agency from general taxation, the White Paper proposes a fee-based registration or licensing scheme for food businesses.

It is vague about the details. Is every fish-and-chip shop to be charged a fee? Since many food poisoning incidents originate on farms, there is no reason for farmers to be exempt. What is to be done about imported food, which will come from producers who do not pay the fees? Raising revenue in this way seems likely to be both divisive and inefficient. If this independent agency is as important as ministers yesterday claimed, then it is important enough to be financed without funds from the industry it is supposed to police.

THE PIPER AND THE TUNE

Covent Garden's new chairman should have undivided loyalty

When Gerald Kaufman's select committee fired its noisy blitzkrieg at the Royal Opera House last month, it took particular aim at the predominance of what it dismissed as art-loving amateur insiders on its board. Covent Garden, it said, would be better off chaired by "a philistine with the requisite financial acumen". Despite his enthusiasm for the Spice Girls and Tina Turner, Sir Colin Southgate, who is virtually certain to be confirmed today as successor to the departed Lord Chadlington as chairman of the Royal Opera House, is happily not a philistine. He is so far from being an insider that many senior Covent Garden executives, including its director, Mary Allen, have only just met him. And, although the earnings and share price of EMI, the music empire that he has chaired since 1989, have performed pretty miserably in recent months, he has vast business experience to bring to a prestigious but crisis-racked institution.

Chris Smith, the Culture Secretary, who has pressed hard for Sir Colin's appointment, clearly believes that he has identified the ideal combination of novelty, competence and commitment. It would be interesting to know how much thought he has given to the nature of Sir Colin's existing, and continuing, business commitment. There is a clear potential conflict between the interests of EMI, the world's third largest record company, in promoting the leading musicians and singers with whom it has exclusive contracts, and the imperative need for the Royal Opera House to arrest its vertiginous decline into near-bankruptcy.

Sir Colin may believe that no such conflict will in practice arise, because part of his remit will be to disentangle the board from day-to-day management. This would concentrate the board's efforts on fundraising,

best financial practice and co-operation with Sir Richard Eyre's review, leaving Ms Allen to exercise her proper managerial responsibility for production plans and internal reforms such as sorting out the House's antediluvian union practices.

But this division of labour cannot, in the nature of the ROH, be watertight. Covent Garden finances are intimately related to the fees and contracts awarded to the great international names. Bernard Haitink, the current musical director, is for example on EMI's books; and when the great man retires, the ultimate decision on his replacement will rest with the Chairman. Were he to pick Sir Simon Rattle, might he be vulnerable to accusations that he had favoured another EMI star?

Then there is the question of performance fees — one of opera's worst problems. More than 10 per cent of the budget for each opera production goes to the conductor and three or four world-class names — singers such as Roberto Alagna and Angela Gheorghiu, Thomas Hampson or Amanda Roocroft, all of whom record for EMI. The producers' interest must be to sign them up at the lowest feasible cost — and to penalise heavily those who cost the House fortunes through late cancellation, something for which Alagna, for one, is well known. Since disputes can be public and awkward, the executive needs to be confident of the board's backing.

The last thing the ROH needs is further offstage drama. The merest whiff of further divisions between board and management could be fatally destructive. Sir Colin is a prosperous man with no further need to prove himself in business. It lies in his power to remove the only serious question mark over his appointment. His first service to the ROH should be to retire from EMI.

ZE SWINE HAVE ESCAPED

Great entertainment when pigs can fly to freedom

"Down," grunted Ginger urgently. The two fugitives plunged headfirst into the Wilshire undergrowth and lay there quivering. Their ruddy winter coats camouflaged them perfectly in the January bracken. But they were not a moment too soon. Only an expert spy-catcher would have noticed the tremor of the leaves from their fast thick pants and their curly tails protruding above the briars. And the search party of police and villagers were no experts as they tramped through the wood ten yards from the escapers.

"Phew, we nearly made a cold bacon sandwich then," squeaked Tamworth, the smaller of the two porkers. They had been on the run for a week now. Their snout shot had been in all the papers. "What would they have done to us if they had caught us?" "Don't ask," said Ginger. "Remember what they did to dear old Bath Chap before we made our break for freedom from their Colditz abattoir." Tamworth turned as pale as was possible for a pig of his complexion.

"We can do it," Ginger encouraged his companion, as the noise of their pursuers faded from the wood. "We are the Ginger Tamworths, the nearest of the domestic breeds to the original wild boar of Old England. And some of those are returning to Southern England. As the local Maquis will help us to an escape route to a safe sty. We can still out-think and outrun the old enemy. And in this part of Wilshire a grunt will get us past any roadblock without arousing suspicion. Anything more than a

grunt sounds foreign to the locals." "Dinks, this is just like one of their favourite genre of prisoner-of-war films," said Tamworth. "Those always have an impregnable and escape-proof prison, just like Malinesbury abattoir used to be. In the standard plot there is always stiff-upper-lipped humour from the inmates, just as when you and I ran around the slaughter-house for ten minutes, before we squeezed through a fence. And in their PoW genre the prisoners always escape by some porcine ploy. They get out by a tunnel hidden under a wooden horse, or by pole-vaulting or hiding in the dustcart." Ginger sighed: "We should have thought of a dustcart."

"But we did something even more spectacular," squeaked Tamworth. "We swam across the River Avon in winter spate. Pigs are the only quadrupeds which do not swim naturally. In the water we are supposed to cut our throats with our frantic trotters because of our low bacon line. And as we swam, I heard the commandant screaming, as he often does in the films 'Ze swine have escaped.' But does our pig-of-war escape drama have a happy ending?" "Oh yes, I think it must," snorted Ginger.

"Cinema audiences have come to expect it. Even if they manage to recapture us now, they are never going to put us back in the can or turn us into sausages. Our national audience would never allow it. People are already applying to adopt us. That is what they mean by great escapist entertainment."

Private life of a public servant

From Farther Joseph Walsh

Sir, I cannot agree with Peter Riddell ("Britain remains a nation apart", January 12) that Robin Cook's private life is of no importance compared to issues such as the EU and the improvement of schools, hospitals and the economy. There are some of us who believe that the wholesale abandonment of personal morality is at the root of many serious social problems which wouldn't be there in the first place if people kept the Ten Commandments.

It is at least disingenuous and at most erroneous for Tony Blair to suggest, in his *Breakfast with Frost* interview (report, January 12), that Mr Cook's private life has no bearing on his stature as Foreign Secretary. Mr Cook has reneged on solemn promises (to his wife); he has broken a contract; he has been found to be untruthful in a very serious matter; he has failed to honour his commitments. If I were Foreign Secretary for some other nation I would keep a wary eye on such a man, especially when he is signing contracts.

He is a bad example and should resign.

Yours sincerely,
JOSEPH WALSH,
7 Cardross Road,
Dumbarton G82 4JE,
January 12.

From Mr Christopher Power

Sir, Everyone in public life, whether they like it or not, acts as a role model for the rest of us. The reasons and justification for the breakdown of someone else's marriage are no concern of ours, but it is profoundly depressing that a man whom we have elected to high office in a Government which rightly seeks to set higher standards of morality and compassion, should end his marriage so brutally and then shamelessly flaunt his mistress in public even before a divorce has been granted. Doing this in the course of his official business makes a link between private and public life which only compounds the offence.

Peter Riddell implies that because the public may be more understanding about infidelity than financial impropriety, the former does not matter. I regret that the Foreign Secretary apparently shares this attitude.

Yours faithfully,
C. D. POWER,
Swanmore Lodge,
Upper Swanmore,
Hampshire SO32 2QN,
January 12.

From Mrs Jane P. Stewart

Sir, It is self-evident that, regardless of political affiliation, a Foreign and Commonwealth Secretary should not only be a person of the highest integrity who commands international respect, but also that he or she should wield outstanding interpersonal skills — both in public and in private — and possess a particular emotional sensitivity to the needs and feelings of others.

The person who represents the best interests of this nation in international arenas where a wide variety of cultures and beliefs come together must be a consummate diplomat, able to demonstrate patience, tact and compassion as well as a concern for the demands of social etiquette — not someone who attracts the epithet of "louse" (Libby Purves's article, January 13).

The Prime Minister should therefore reconsider whether Mr Cook is the best person to represent our country when the evidence of the last week and other occasions — for example in relation to Kashmir — suggest otherwise. If Mr Blair persists in supporting Mr Cook as Foreign and Commonwealth Secretary he not only confirms the hollowness of the Labour Party's policy on human rights and its claims to be a decent, caring party, but, more importantly, he also endangers the nation's integrity and credibility.

Yours faithfully,
JANE P. STEWART,
Birnie Cottage, Dollar,
Clackmannanshire FK14 7HG,
January 13.

The gentler sex

From Mr M. Braithwaite

Sir, The majority of divorces are now initiated by women. The majority of articles on divorce/lifestyle issues in *The Times* seem to be written by women.

Therefore when Edwina Currie leaves her husband ("He wanted to watch TV, I wanted to be on it") she is merely seen to be "getting a life" or leaving a man who can no longer satisfy the aspirations of the new breed of superwoman.

Robin Cook however is, like all men, emotionally retarded (Magazine, January 10) compared to the average woman. By about ten years apparently. His wife Margaret is a saint. To Libby Purves he's a "creep", "louse" and a "cad" all rolled into one. Lady journalists should realise the war of the sexes has claimed enough casualties. Why can't they follow the current example of Northern Ireland — put down their guns and get round the negotiating table?

Yours, in the spirit of brotherly love,
M. BRAITHWAITE,
27 Ibstone Avenue,
Milton Keynes, MK13 8EA,
January 13.

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

1 Pennington Street, London E1 9XN Telephone 0171-782 5000

Peril for press in Human Rights Bill

From the Chairman of the Press Complaints Commission

Sir, David Pannick's excellent article on the injunction granted by Mr Justice Moses preventing the identification of the Home Secretary's son (Law, January 13) makes a number of very good points.

For those who have been warning about the perils contained in the Human Rights Bill, the injunction was timely. If the Bill remains unamended, the courts will be given new powers to grant interim injunctions of exactly this sort. These are bound to have a chilling effect on investigative reporting and are also likely to be used to increase the opportunity for conflict between the press and the courts and into which the Government is bound to be drawn.

But I would add an important point. In situations such as these, self regulation is infinitely preferable to

statute — because it is based on the voluntary restraint of editors in not printing what they know to be true but what would breach their own ethical code of practice. In cases of this sort, where the rest of the world knows information but we do not, the law will not produce self-restraint — but effective self regulation could.

Those who doubt it should look at the paparazzi pictures of Prince William taken at Eton and published not here but in foreign publications. It isn't — and never could be — the law which stops those pictures being printed here. It is a voluntary code to which all newspapers are committed, and which could so easily be undermined by the Human Rights Bill.

Yours faithfully,
WAKEHAM,
Chairman,
Press Complaints Commission,
1 Salisbury Square, EC4Y 8AE,
January 14.

Unsporting row over bitten ear

From Mr Tommy Bedford

Sir, The first game played by the Australian rugby touring team to Great Britain and Ireland in 1966 was at Ifley Road against Oxford University.

For most of this match the Dark Blues more than held their own, thanks largely to the strength of their pack and their front row. The Australians became frustrated by the increasing difficulty of winning even their own ball possession from the scrum-mage. With 15 minutes of the match remaining, and in the midst of another retreating and torrid scrum for Australia, a yell followed by an eruption broke up the scrum, revealing blood streaming from the ear of Oliver Waldron, the huge Oxford (and Irish international) front row forward. A good part of the ear had been nearly bitten off by an Australian and was left dangling by a small strip of skin.

In those days of amateur rugby Waldron left the field to be stitched up and the game continued. Oxford, reduced to 14 men (substitutes were not allowed in those days), went on to lose. That night Oxford and the Australians, including Ollie Waldron, dined and parried together.

Early the next morning I, as captain of the university team, went to the Randolph Hotel to bid the Australians farewell. As he had done immediately after the match Bill McLaren, their manager, again apologised for the unworthy incident. Ross Cullen, their hooker and ear-biter, had been ordered home to Australia and was already at Heathrow. Cullen quietly disappeared and I never encountered him playing rugby again. Waldron continued playing the game, including for Ireland.

I cannot help comparing the reaction this week when London Scottish's Australian player had his ear similarly bitten by a Bath player (leading article, "Fenn's ear", January 14). How different the Bath players in not owning up. How tardy the Bath club in bringing the culprit to heel. How promptly the Australian player threatened to sue. How different the attitude of the media.

What a difference the new "professionalism" has made to the game. Yours sincerely,
TOMMY BEDFORD
(South Africa international, 1963-71),
59 Ladbroke Road, W11 3PD,
January 14.

Communists and CAP

From Mr Geoffrey Hollis

Sir, Dr Jack Cunningham, in his speech to the Oxford Farming Conference (report, January 7) said that extending the CAP to former communist countries seeking to enter the EU would be "reminiscent of the old command economy that they have so recently and painfully shaken off".

What a difference the new "professionalism" has made to the game. Yours sincerely,
TOMMY BEDFORD
(South Africa international, 1963-71),
59 Ladbroke Road, W11 3PD,
January 14.

Neanderthal's return?

From Mr Patrick Turner

Sir, You report ("Dinosaurs are dead and this is final", January 8) that research has shown that genetic material cannot be extracted from lifeforms trapped in amber millions of years ago, and conclude that the scenario of *Jurassic Park* is therefore an impossibility.

Almost in passing, however, the report says that the upper limit for extracting genetic material from animal remains appears to be 100,000 years, which includes Neanderthal man, woolly mammoths and sabre tooth tigers.

Surely any prospect of replicating any of those would be just as extraordinary as replicating dinosaurs. The possibility of co-existing with our ancestors of 100,000 years ago is a much more intriguing one than simply cloning modern human beings.

Yours faithfully,
PATRICK TURNER,
Fir Cottage, Wheeler Lane,
Witley, Surrey GU8 5QP,
January 9.

Early bird

From Commodore Geoffrey Edwards, RN

Sir, I appreciate that shopping for Christmas comes earlier every year, but the advertisement for "The Dickie Bird Character Jug" carried in your January 9 edition, with the exhortation to "order now for Christmas", is perhaps taking matters a little far.

Yours sincerely,
G. H. EDWARDS,
Rua Dom Afonso de Bourbon,
Quinta de Bellavista 6c,
Soa Joao do Estoril,
2765 Estoril, Portugal,
January 12.

The 'minefield' of state pensions

From Sir Michael Ogden, QC

Sir, Sensible people should support the Government's aim to restrict welfare hand-outs, under whatever name, to those who need them (report, January 12). Otherwise we risk being engulfed in the same financial calamities as seem increasingly likely to occur in a number of developed countries such as France where, for example, engine drivers are allowed to retire on full pension at the age of 55.

However, old age pensions pose a special problem. They are underfunded, but to what extent it is difficult to say because national insurance contributions cover the whole range of state benefits. I would not object to losing that part of my state pension which can fairly be said not to have been paid for by me.

On the other hand, having paid contributions towards a state pension for many years, I would regard losing all of it through means-testing as naked expropriation or legalised theft. Even more so would those who deferred taking their pension in order to enhance its value when they did decide to take it.

To determine what fair pension figures would be if the hand-out element is removed would not be easy, and many people would prefer it to be done by a neutral body rather than by government. I would not trust the DSS. It requires recourse to the Ombudsman to discover that, for almost three years, I had been paid significantly less than my pension entitlement.

I would have complete confidence in the Government Actuary's Department doing the task fairly and competently. Nevertheless, since many would lack confidence in any state body doing the job, an obvious solu-

Prostate appeal

From Dame Stella Rimington, Chairman of the Institute of Cancer Research

Sir, I would like to extend my thanks to your readers and to the staff of *The Times* for the wonderful support they have shown for the Institute of Cancer Research's Everyman appeal over the Christmas period.

Your articles highlighting the urgent need for increased awareness of prostate cancer and for funding for research generated enormous interest. We are still receiving donations and the total figure raised will certainly exceed £100,000, which is a tremendous result.

The first £40,000 will go, as announced, to buying the gene sequen-

cer for our laboratories at the Institute of Cancer Research. The rest will go towards our fund to build the UK's first dedicated male cancer research centre at our site in Sutton. We still have a long way to go in fundraising for the centre, but the generosity of *The Times* readers has given this project a real boost.

The support of *The Times* and its readers has also played a major part in helping to raise awareness and understanding of the male cancers which have for too long been neglected.

Yours etc,
STELLA RIMINGTON,
Chairman,
The Institute of Cancer Research,
17a Onslow Gardens, SW7 3AL,
January 13.

Literary loss

From Miss Linda Sutton

Sir, When E. M. Forster died in 1970, his obituary in *The Times* was headed: "One of the most esteemed English novelists of his time."

Now, the astonishing proposal to build 500 new houses at Steverage North in Hertfordshire — which was given green light status in 1994 — is compounded by the threat of destroying the spirit of a place with vital literary associations.

Forster lived in the area during his formative years, from the age of four to 14. "Rooks Nest", the house he lived in with his widowed mother, still stands and is clearly described as "Howard's End" in his novel of the same name. The field adjoining his home is described in *Howard's End*: "It was one of those open-air drawing-rooms

that have been formed, hundreds of years ago, out of the smaller fields. So the boundary hedge zigzagged down the hill at right angles, and at the bottom there was a little green annex — a sort of powder-closet for the cows."

The cows' "powder-closet" still remains on the field, which is one of the proposed building sites.

Many of the characters in Forster's novels, *Howard's End*, *A Room with a View* and *A Passage to India*, were based on the people he knew in childhood and adolescence, in "Forster country" as it is known locally.

We must save a place that was such a great source of inspiration. Why not restore and develop the many derelict properties within our towns and cities to make the homes we need.

Yours sincerely,
LINDA SUTTON,
192 Battersea Bridge Road, SW11 3AE,
January 13.

Honours even

From Mr John Byrne

Sir, Mr J. M. D. Legge (letter, January 5) feels James Lees-Milne's "splendid work" should have been publicly recognised by an honour. He was offered significant honours: he declined them. While this was a matter of intensely private principle to him, in fairness to those who operate "the system" it seems right now to make it public. Clear evidence may be found in James Lees-Milne's archive now preserved in the Beinecke Library at Yale.

Yours faithfully,
JOHN BYRNE,
6 Sunningdale Gardens, W8 6PX,
January 13.

Not taken from there

From Mr Spike Milligan

Sir, In your obituary of Frank Muir (January 3) it was said that *Take It From Here* had influenced *The Goon Show*. I must admit the show was brilliant and very witty but it did not influence me one jot.

Happy New Year to you.
Sincerely,
SPIKE,
9 Orme Court, Bayswater, W2 4RL,
January 8.

Letters for publication may be faxed to 0171-782 5046. e-mail to: letters@the-times.co.uk

OBITUARIES

KENNETH BIGGS, GC

Kenneth Biggs, GC, former bank manager and ordnance officer, died on January 11 aged 86. He was born on February 26, 1911.

ONE OF the more extraordinary examples of leadership and bravery to grace the annals of the George Cross, Kenneth Biggs, aided by Acting Staff Sergeant Sydney Rogerson, undoubtedly prevented massive destruction and almost certainly heavy loss of life when he tackled a blaze on an ammunition train in Wiltshire in the year after the war.

On January 2, 1946, ammunition



Chief responsible

was being transferred from lorries to railway wagons at a depot in the Savernake Forest when a violent explosion occurred. In seconds, a three-ton lorry and two twenty-two railway wagons were blasted out of existence. Fires swept the yard and more wagons burst into flames.

Further explosions took place, killing eight soldiers, seriously injuring six others and destroying two more lorries and another 27 wagons. Fires raged uncontrolled throughout the freightyard, threatening not only the train being loaded but a fully-loaded ammunition train lying alongside. In all, another 96 wagons, containing

2,000 tons of explosives, in the form of artillery shells and mines, were threatened.

Had these lethal cargoes detonated simultaneously, the effect would have been as devastating as that of a modern battlefield nuclear weapon. Not only most of the soldiers in the vicinity would have vaporised, but there would undoubtedly have been severe loss of life among the 5,000 inhabitants of the nearby market town of Marlborough.

Rogerson, who was at the scene at the moment of the blast, coped magnificently with the early moments of the crisis, organising the removal of the wounded and himself crawling under blazing wagons to extricate seriously injured men. When Captain (Temporary Major) Biggs arrived from the ammunition depot he took charge of the entire operation. He called the stunned soldiers, and by his personal example put heart into them. He personally uncoupled a blazing wagon containing 55 inch shells from the rest of the train, pushed it to safety with another officer and then extinguished the blaze.

In the midst of cordite fires and further explosions he arranged firebreaks, all the while moving among his men, who were not only shell-shocked by the sheer violence and scale of the catastrophe, but understandably apprehensive about the possibility of the sudden death which loomed over them all. Exploding propellants, which continually flung 55 inch shells into the air all around them, only added to the terrors of the occasion.

There could be no respite from the task of extinguishing fires and uncoupling the wagons which were in the most immediate danger. Biggs and Rogerson and their men worked feverishly throughout the night to make sure that every burning wagon was extinguished, and that those that were burning, too fiercely to be made safe were



"The scene that greeted their eyes when dawn broke was one of massive devastation. The wrecks of lorries and railway wagons strewn the ground." Savernake in the aftermath of the enormous ammunition explosion of January 1946

pushed out of harm's way. In the end 69 wagons were saved. Nevertheless, the scene that greeted their eyes when dawn broke was one of massive devastation. The wrecks of lorries and

railway wagons were strewn across the ground. Craters, twisted railway lines and splintered telegraph poles created a landscape that resembled the pockmarked terrain of the Flanders of 1914-18. Unexploded

shells and detonators made it still extremely dangerous to pick a way through the debris. It was not until late morning on January 3 that the last fire was extinguished. But by then, the principal threat, that to

Marlborough, had been averted. And the citation to Biggs's George Cross acknowledged that his conduct had been the principal factor in averting a large-scale human disaster.

Sydney Rogerson, who died in 1993, won the other George Cross that day, which also saw the award of an MBE, two George Medals and five British Empire Medals to those who had taken part in the firefighting operations. In addition to his GC, Biggs was awarded the US Bronze Star, a large quantity of American ammunition had been among that saved from destruction at Savernake.

Kenneth Alfred Biggs was born in London and educated at Tollington School, Muswell Hill. From school he went straight into the Midland Bank, where he was to work for the rest of his professional life.

In 1940 he joined the Army and was commissioned in the Royal Army Ordnance Corps in December that year. Then began five years of wartime service overseas during which time he was never granted home leave and in consequence never saw his wife, Jane, whom he had married in 1938, until the war was over. An expert in the supply and storage of ammunition he was involved in ordnance support to British units in Palestine and Iraq, before going out to India, where he provided similar services for the 14th Army in Burma. He had returned home and was contemplating demobilisation when the Savernake disaster occurred.

Not long afterwards he returned to his banking career in the West End of London, eventually moving back to North London, where he was successively manager of the Muswell Hill and Edmonton branches of the Midland Bank.

He retired in 1971 and went to live at Stockland, Devon, before returning to settle at Ewhurst, Surrey. A modest and courteous man, he could never be persuaded either to talk about his war service or of the terrific events of January 2-3, 1946.

Biggs's wife Jane died in 1995. He is survived by their son.

THE RIGHT REV ALASTAIR HAGGART

The Right Rev Alastair Haggart, former Bishop of Edinburgh and Primate of the Scottish Episcopal Church, died on January 11 aged 82. He was born on October 10, 1915.



ALASTAIR HAGGART had been retired from the Scottish episcopal bench since 1985 but continued to play a significant part in the life of the Church both in Britain and within the worldwide Anglican Communion. In 1968 he made a marked impact at the Lambeth Conference, in which he was appointed chaplain - a role that he fulfilled with distinction, despite having undergone a coronary by-pass operation only shortly beforehand.

A committed ecumenist, Bishop Haggart was one of the architects of the Inter-Church Process - "Not Strangers but Pilgrims" - which saw the old British Council of Churches replaced by new "ecumenical instruments" throughout Britain and Ireland. During the Pope's visit to Canterbury in 1982 he initiated a dialogue which offered a new language

for the discussion of inter-faith marriages.

Of Highland stock, Haggart began his Christian life as a member of the Free Kirk. The decision to join the Scottish Episcopal Church was made in his youth, after his parents moved from Fort William to Glasgow. It was in his character to apply serious thought to an issue and then reach a principled decision. This was

the violence and horror of the Spanish Civil War. This led him to find a home, alongside Dick Sheppard and Vera Britain, in the Peace Pledge Union.

The same pattern of radical assessment showed itself in an incident when he was precursor of St Ninian's Cathedral, Perth. A local industrialist, conscious of the time Haggart used up making pastoral visits on foot, offered him the gift of a car. Haggart's reply was courteous but firm: "I am extremely grateful for your generosity but until your workers are paid more than a poverty wage, I do not believe that it would be right for a Christian minister to benefit from the profits of your company."

Alastair Iain Haggart was educated at local schools in Fort William and Glasgow and began his working career at Burroughs Accounting Machines. But in his early twenties he left to train for the ministry at Coates Hall, Edinburgh, the theological college of the Scottish Episcopal Church. From there he progressed as an exhibitioner to Hatfield College, Durham, and was ordained in 1941 to a

curacy at Glasgow Cathedral. During this time he married his first wife Peggy by whom he had two daughters. A further curacy at St Mary's, Hendon, gave him experience of the Church of England. After three years at Hendon he was appointed precursor of St Ninian's Cathedral, Perth, where he had his encounter with the would-be industrial philanthropist.

His next move in 1951 was to an incumbency in Glasgow - at St Oswald's, King's Park. Eight years later he became precursor of St Paul's Cathedral, Dundee, where he stayed until 1971. There then followed a unanimous call from the College of Bishops to accept the appointment as Principal of the Theological College in Edinburgh.

In this appointment his theological honesty made him a challenging teacher, a role that he continued as bishop, sharing in the diocesan training course for non-stipendiary clergy, of which one of the highlights was the weekend he contributed on "Faith and Doubt".

Elected Bishop of Edinburgh in 1975 and two years later Primate of the Episcopal Church in Scotland, he described himself as "an old man in a hurry". No one recognised more clearly than he did the need for radical reform in the Victorian structures of the Scottish Episcopal Church.

He laboured indefatigably to replace them with a General Synod. He presided over the process that saw new liturgies evolving, new pastoral disciplines, the remarriage of those who had been divorced and new patterns of ministry, both lay and ordained. The Church of England even began to look with envy at Anglican freedom developing north of the Border.

After 34 years of marriage his first wife died. In 1983 he married, secondly, Mary Scholes, a chief area nursing officer, who survives him, together with the two daughters by his first marriage.

JACK GRIMM

Jack Grimm, oil tycoon and explorer, died on January 6 aged 72. He was born May 18, 1925.

Born in Wagoner, Oklahoma, Grimm studied petroleum geology at the University of Oklahoma. During his sophomore year, he met his wife, Jackie, at a fraternity party. They spent their honeymoon panning for gold in California.

During school, Grimm had hitchhiked to Texas to visit Bunker Hunt, the son of billionaire oilman H. L. Hunt. Impressed by the lavish life of a wildcat, he declined job offers from oil companies, and in 1951 settled with his bride in Breckenridge, Texas. There, he enlisted investors to try their luck drilling in a newly discovered oilfield. In 1955, after 25 dry holes, the couple moved on to Abilene, known



As "the buckle of the Bible Belt"

JACK GRIMM claimed to the end that he had a chunk of Noah's Ark in his briefcase. He spent decades and millions of his own and other people's money searching for elusive treasure and mythical beasts. With no proven success but inexhaustible faith, he financed and led expeditions to track down the Abominable Snowman, the lost city of Atlantis, the Loch Ness Monster and, most famously, the wreckage of the Titanic.

In 1970, he led a group of Texas oilmen in financing a quest for the sunken liner, employing reputable academics, state-of-the-art sonar equipment and film directors to record their three expeditions. He applied his genius for deal-making to crank up a publicity machine, negotiating a lucrative book deal for the story of his life and the search, and hiring the country and western singer Kenny Starr to record *Ballad of the Titanic*. He also arranged for a photographic monkey to accompany the search, having trained it to point to the search area on a chart. The scientists were outraged, and said it was the monkey and not "Fire the scientists," came Grimm's reply.

With the scientists reinstated, the venture resulted in a documentary film, a grainy photograph of what Grimm said was the *Titanic's* anchor, and a book, *Beyond Reason: The Search for the Titanic*. But in 1985 all the team's claims were swept aside when an American-French expedition found the *Titanic's* remains. Unabashed, the Grimm determination switched to finding the lost city of Atlantis.

Jack Grimm said that his appetite for exploration was inherited from his grandfather, who had braved Oklahoma Indian territory when it opened up.

As a boy, he nearly blew himself up with dynamite purchased at a hardware store. He had used it to blast a creek bed in search of a bandit's treasure which his grandfather said was buried under a tree. Thereafter, explosions figured prominently in his life. As a US Marine demolitions expert during the Second World War he sustained a leg wound from an

enemy hand grenade, and in 1981 he spent a fortune blasting a Texas cliffside for a 2,000-ft memorial to the American bison. The monument was to have been three times the size of the presidential relief at Mt Rushmore. His quixotic gestures over the years included an offer of \$500,000 for the first "conclusive" pictures of the Abominable Snowman, and, in 1970, financial backing for an attempt by the now defunct Search Ark Foundation to find Noah's Ark atop Turkey's Mt Ararat, its resting place according to the Biblical account.

His eccentric brand of conservatism had also played some part in that undertaking. "It had always bothered me that communism was a Godless society," he had told *The Washington Post*. "I thought that if you could prove that there had been a flood, an ark and eight survivors then you would have to accept the Bible."

His aerial photographic survey of Loch Ness in search of the city monster turned up only an out-of-focus photograph of a blurry shadow. But Grimm always remained upbeat. His childlike wonderment was anchored in commercial acumen and an outsize work ethic. "My projects are always structured as business ventures," he once said. "They take full advantage of tax exemptions and are intended to recover their costs and turn a profit."

A man of distinctly unpretentious tastes - Asti Spumante, Florsheim shoes and checked suits - he recently fell under the spell of a television evangelist who, Grimm was convinced, had cured the pain of his old war injury. Over the years, he may have garnered more publicity than scientific evidence, but in Abilene he was a hometown hero. As one local put it Jack Grimm had "more nerve than a broken tooth". He is survived by his wife and a son and a daughter.

PERSONAL COLUMN

Advertisement for Personal Column containing various services: Memorial Services, Tickets for Sale, For Sale, Situations Vacant, Flats to Let, Announcements, Situations Wanted, Overseas Travel, Flights Directory, Winter Sports, Musical Instruments, Gifts, Flats Share, Court & Social, Legal, Public Company & Parliamentary Notices.

LADY GOLFER'S ACTION.

GAVIN V BUCKLAND AND OTHERS. (Before Mr. Justice Coleridge and a Special Jury.) The plaintiff, Mrs. Gavin, sought to recover damages from Mr. Stanley Clifford, Commander Buckland, R.N., and Mr. M.J. Robinson (both secretaries), and the other members of the Chesney Golf Club for alleged breach of contract on the ground that she had been precluded from using the club links. She also brought a second action against Commander Buckland for libel...

ON THIS DAY

January 15, 1915. This was clearly a case of a golf club rumpus, by no means uncommon, which should perhaps never have come to court. The jury found for the plaintiff in respect of the breach of contract, and assessed the damages at £5. In the case of libel they found that the words were defamatory, but that the defendant was not accused by name. His LORDSHIP said he would give judgement tomorrow.

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BUSINESS EDITOR Patience Wheatcroft

THURSDAY JANUARY 15 1998

Businesses to help to shape planning law

By Christine Buckley, Industrial Correspondent

THE most far-reaching reform of planning regulations in more than 50 years will today be launched by the Government.

Everything from housing policy to the use of green belt land and from public inquiries to transport planning and industrial development will be under review.

The Department of the Environment, Transport and the Regions (DETR) is keen to put the shake-up on a fast track and aims to have completed consultation by April so that it can start the reforms.

The overhaul of planning rules will have significant implications for industry, business and inward investment. Retailers and other large property and land developers will be most affected by changes to the system. BAA, which has been locked in a lengthy planning inquiry over its aim for a fifth terminal at Heathrow Airport, will also be keen to see changes to the system that has led to expensive and time-consuming hearings.

The changes, which will be disclosed in a parliamentary written answer by Richard Caborn, Minister for the Regions and Planning, have been drafted to fulfil Labour's manifesto pledges to modernise government and to give more power to the regions.

Europe will also be a fundamental focus for the reform of planning regulations in the UK in anticipation of planning without frontiers on the Continent. Britain will need to play a part in common planning arrangements to encourage easier development by businesses that want to straddle borders.

The regions will also play a key part in co-ordinating poli-

cies through the regional development agencies that are planned by the Government. Yesterday John Prescott, the Deputy Prime Minister, presented the Regional Development Agencies Bill to the House of Commons where it was given its second reading.

It is expected that the Government will consider incentives to persuade developers to use derelict sites rather than undeveloped land. If more building is encouraged on old sites then transport networks

between power generators on emissions so that overall guidelines are met while generators operate individually according to their needs.

It is also likely that the Government will consider treating as special cases such large projects as Terminal 5 in order to streamline the process. All parts of the planning system will come under scrutiny, from local authority level to the often lengthy appeals process. The present system was introduced after the Second World War and has never been subject to a wholesale overhaul.

Retailers, commercial developers, architects and house-builders will be among those keen to set out their case as the Government begins consultation in the hope of getting a more transparent and faster system. Planning has been a constant source of frustration to many people involved in it because of long and bureaucratic inquiries.

The DETR will put regional co-ordination at the heart of the implementation of planning reforms. Mr Caborn has been a strong advocate for regional government, although the regional agencies have caused strong disagreements between departments — particularly between the DETR and the Department of Trade and Industry — over how much control the regions should exert.

Giving the regions more of a say in planning policy is also intended to appease the objections of many local people to big projects because they often complain that their voices are either not heard or discounted. Such trading would follow the exchange that now operates

could be better integrated. Regenerated land is more likely to be served by existing transport so there will be no need to build the roads or rail links that are needed for green field locations.

It is also considering other ways of modernising the planning system such as tradeable consents, which developers could exchange as long as they did not breach the spirit of an overall development plan. Such trading would follow the exchange that now operates

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Sir Stanley Kalms, left, chairman, and John Clare, who said new software would lift the market

Dixons shares tumble

By Fraser Nelson

SHARES in Dixons suffered their largest fall since Black Monday after the electrical chain said poor sales of computers at Christmas meant profits this year would not meet City expectations.

The shares tumbled by 10 per cent to a six-month low of 524p, as the company said the summer's windfall spending seemed to have sapped demand from its crucial end-of-year trading period. Like-for-like sales fell 4 per cent in the eight weeks to January 10.

John Clare, chief executive,

said: "This came as a complete shock to us. But people who bought Dixons in the summer on the back of their windfalls don't need to buy them again at Christmas."

The price of computers — which now speak for 20 per cent of Dixons sales — fell by 10 per cent over the six months after holding steady for the past couple of years.

Mr Clare said he was personally confident that the market would be kept alive by new computer software needing ever more powerful machines

to run efficiently. Microsoft's Windows 98 was, he added, a case in point.

Analysts are now looking for pre-tax profits of £215 million (£230 million) at full time, and £235 million the year after — which would be Dixons' lowest earnings growth for six years. The summer boom led to pre-tax profit of £77.1 million (£57.5 million) in the 28 weeks to November 15. A dividend of 2.9p (2.4p) is due on March 2.

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Earnings figures revive interest rate fears

By Alasdair Murray, Economics Correspondent

THE Government yesterday urged companies to curb wage increases after an unexpected jump in average earnings figures revived fears of an interest rate rise next month.

The annual growth in average earnings increased from a revised figure of 4.5 per cent in October to 4.75 per cent in November with analysts predicting it could accelerate above 5 per cent.

Unemployment also fell again — reaching a 17-year low — heightening City concerns that the tightening labour market could increase inflationary pressures.

The Office for National Statistics said the rise in average earnings reflected end of year City bonuses as well as a jump in overtime in the manufacturing sector. The ONS said yesterday claimant unemployment fell 28,700 to 1,411,200 — or 5 per cent of the workforce — the lowest level since July 1980.

Alistair Darling, Chief Secretary to the Treasury, said last night that sharp rises in pay could undermine the Government's attempts to introduce greater economic stability. "Central to this aim is the need to ensure that pay increases are affordable, from boardroom to the shop floor, in both the public and private sectors," he said.

The Bank of England has repeatedly said that it believes earnings growth above 4.5 per cent is incompatible with meeting the inflation target. The minutes from the December monetary policy meeting, also published yesterday, again highlighted the Bank's concerns about "skills shortages and emerging wage pressure", although the Bank made no change to rates following that meeting.

BUSINESS TODAY

FTSE 100	5106.8 (+23.0)
Yield	5.15%
FTSE All share	2408.42 (+8.48)
Nikkei	15121.98 (+388.04)
New York	2161.77 (+11.34)
Dow Jones	7718.18 (+15.88)
S&P Composite	949.25 (+2.87)

Federal Funds	5.75%	(5.75%)
Long Bond	105.75%	(105.75%)
Yield	5.71%	(5.73%)

3-month Interbank	7.75%	(7.75%)
Life long gilt	128.75%	(124.75%)

New York	1.8300*	(1.8345)
London	1.8307	(1.8329)
DM	2.9724	(2.9738)
FF	9.8506	(9.8591)
SF	2.6177	(2.6184)
Yen	214.52	(215.25)
£ Index	104.8	(104.8)

London	1.8220*	(1.8195)
DM	5.1030*	(5.0935)
FF	131.27*	(131.477)
Yen	110.2	(110.2)

Tokyo close Yen	132.86
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Brent 15-day (Mar)	\$15.50 (\$15.40)
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London close	\$284.85 (\$280.45)
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* denotes midday trading price

Asian markets bounce back

STOCK markets and currencies rallied around Asia yesterday as hopes rose that tours by top-level US and International Monetary Fund officials had persuaded the region's political leaders to commit themselves to economic reforms.

Shares in Hong Kong and Jakarta rallied by about 6 per cent and the Singapore stock market bounced by 7.5 per cent. The Tokyo market rose nearly 2.5 per cent. The US Administration hopes to convene a top-level conference of industrialised countries. Recovery continues, page 24

Monsoon float to give Simon £330m fortune

By Fraser Nelson

PETER SIMON, an advertising dropout who went on to form Monsoon, will be worth £330 million next month after taking his women's wear chain to the market through a flotation in which he will pocket about £94 million cash.

Mr Simon, who started outfitting fabrics he discovered while visiting Malta and India in 1972, is expected to become one of the richest men in British retailing when the company floats with a target

price tag of £350 million. John Spooner, its managing director, and Andrew May, finance director, will both receive £5.25 million, including £1.44 million in cash, and eight other managers will each be given a £457,000 holding.

The company is planning to list on the London stock market only 18 months after its previous attempt to float was pulled. On that occasion, BZW resigned as adviser after being unable to ascertain the exact ownership

of Sycamore, a Maltese trust which then owned 67 per cent of the company. Mr Simon and his family have since bought out Sycamore, taking 100 per cent of the shares into the hands of its management.

The company, which also owns the Accessorize chain, is not raising a penny on its stock market flotation.

The group plans to adopt a cautious expansion plan, sticking to prime high street sites and adding around 30 new outlets a year to the 107 already owned.

It has so far bought five former Knickerbox sites, but dismissed speculation that it may be a bidder for the rest of the underwear chain which collapsed last month. Mr Simon said: "When we looked at them closely, there were about five shops we would want from the whole portfolio of 50 — so it just isn't worth it."

Monsoon is also looking at launching a catalogue, aimed at larger women. Mr Simon said: "50 per cent of female adults are over size 16. There is obviously a market there."



Sunny disposition: John Spooner will receive £5.25 million

Venables is banned for seven years

By Jon Ashworth

TERRY VENABLES, the former England football coach, has been banned as a company director for seven years, following a lengthy investigation by the Department of Trade and Industry.

The DTI inquiry focused on four companies, including Edennote, Tottenham Hotspur and Scribes West. Elizabeth Gloster, QC, for the DTI, told Mr Justice Evans-Lombe at the High Court that Mr Venables' conduct made him unfit to be concerned with the management of a company. He had admitted to serious breaches of his responsibilities as a director.

Mr Venables did not attend proceedings. His lawyer said the ban would not affect his current activities.

Nigel Griffiths, the Competition and Consumer Affairs Minister, said: "Even national heroes cannot be allowed to fall below accepted standards of probity when they enter the business world."

Directors' box, page 27

Sears calls a halt to Andersen deal

By Jason Nisse

SEARS, the troubled retailer, will today announce it has ended its £344 million outsourcing deal with Andersen Consulting and will re-employ 650 staff who were transferred to the consultants as part of the agreement.

The announcement will be made as part of the Sears Christmas trading statement, which is eagerly awaited to see whether Selfridges, the department store, has benefited from the trend for upmarket retailers to perform well.

The ten-year deal with Andersen, which involved the consultants running all the information technology and payroll services for Sears, was struck only two years ago and cost the retailer £35 million to implement. Sears has already paid more than £70 million to Andersen in royalties.

Since the deal was struck, Sears has sold or closed nearly all of its shoe operations and has announced plans to demerge Selfridges. This left Andersen looking after a much smaller business than originally envisaged. Sears'

desire to pull out of the deal was first revealed in October, but at that time Andersen had hoped to hold onto the IT and payroll for Selfridges. However, today Sears will reveal the whole operation is being taken back in-house.

As part of the Andersen agreement — which had been negotiated by Liam Strong, the former Sears chief executive who left last year — 900 Sears staff were taken on by Andersen. About 250 have since left and the remainder will return to Sears.

Of the 650 who are returning, most will face redundancy, adding to the tally of more than 1,000 redundancies that have resulted from the restructuring of Sears over the past couple of years. Most of the staff are located in Leicester.

The agreement with Andersen has been structured so that the consultants will not lose out financially. However, Sears has told The Times that it will not pay any compensation to Andersen.

Commentary, page 25

Systems failure taxes self-assessment processor

By Jason Nisse

THE company in charge of processing all the tax forms for the Inland Revenue's controversial self-assessment project has run into problems because of failures in its own accounting systems.

Bailiffs were recently sent into the European headquarters of Electronic Data Systems, at Stockley Park in Middlesex, after one bill was not

paid. The company has had 17 county court judgments against it in the past 12 months. EDS, a Texan firm founded by H Ross Perot, was awarded the £1.5 billion contract to take charge of the information technology systems for the Inland Revenue, which includes self-assessment.

The project has run into controversy after it emerged that more than nine million people, who have yet to return their tax forms, face fines of

upwards of £100 each if they fail to return them by the January 31 deadline. There have been calls for the deadline to be delayed.

EDS has also won contracts for the Department of Social Security, the Department of Transport and the London Borough of Brent and has more government outsourcing work than any other firm.

The full extent of EDS's payment problems are revealed in today's issue

of Computer Weekly, the trade magazine. It says that in November bailiffs entered EDS's Stockley Park headquarters and impounded computers in an attempt to recover a £7,700 debt to a former employee, Bill Croncy, who was awarded the money at an industrial tribunal. EDS gave the bailiffs a cheque for £8,800 to settle the bill.

EDS says the problems were because of the installation of a new payment

system, called European Administration Resources System (Ears).

A spokeswoman said the system was "leading edge" and had won the Chief Executives Panel award for financial systems in the US. However, there had been troubles installing Ears, leading to some payments not being made. "We are entitled to do what we want with our own systems so that we do not experiment with our customers," she said.

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FSA to publish budget

THE Financial Services Authority, the new City watchdog, will be required to publish its proposed budget for consultation at the same time as it publishes its proposals for fees. Helen Liddell, Economic Secretary to the Treasury, said yesterday. "Not only must the FSA use its resources effectively, it must also show the public and industry that it is doing so," she said in an address to the Law Society Commerce and Industry Group. "After all, the costs of regulation are met by the firms under regulation. This means they are ultimately passed to consumers in the form of higher charges or lower returns."

IBT invests

International Biotechnology Trust, the UK fund managed by the Rothschild Bioscience Unit, has invested \$8 million (£5 million) in Onyx Pharmaceuticals, a US company working on genetic treatments for cancer. IBT took up the lion's share of a private placing of shares that raised \$10 million.

First Tech up

First Technology, the manufacturer of crash test dummies, lifted pre-tax profits to £5.8 million (£4.2 million) in the six months to October 31. Turnover rose to £27.7 million (£23.4 million), while earnings per share rose to 7.29p (5.73p). The interim dividend is 1.3p (1.4p).

Cantab deal

Cantab Pharmaceuticals has licensed an early stage project to develop a chicken-pox vaccine to Katsuken, a Japanese healthcare research institute. Cantab may eventually receive licence and milestone fees and royalties.

Harris moves

Tom Harris, the financial director of the Body Shop's UK division, has left to join Mitsubishi Motors, the Japanese car importer. He will head Mitsubishi's finance division and information technology department.

US comments help to boost continuing recovery in Asia

By JANET BUSH, ECONOMICS EDITOR

ASIAN financial markets continued to recover with some vigour yesterday as supportive comments from American officials visiting the region helped to bolster confidence. Key stock markets scored impressive gains and helped to lift currencies. Hong Kong's Hang Seng rallied 507 points to end at 9,227. The Indonesian market gained nearly 6 per cent and shares in Singapore bounced by 7.5 per cent.

Tours of the Far East by key members of the US Administration and the International Monetary Fund have been an important source of renewed stability. Reports from Washington said that America is working with other leading economies to discuss ways of strengthening the international financial system.

One unnamed official said that a meeting was likely to take place "in the next month or two" and would not be confined to the Group of Eight countries.

The G8 is already scheduled to meet in London next month and there was speculation yesterday that this gathering could be expanded to incorporate a discussion of Asia and its implications.

The US official said that Asia would be a significant focus of President Clinton's State of the Union address to Congress on January 27. "The Administration is coming up against concerted opposition in Congress to spending American taxpayers' money on bailing out Asian econo-

mes. William Cohen, US Defence Secretary, became the latest high-ranking US official to make positive noises about Indonesia's commitment to IMF-mandated economic reform. After a meeting with President Suharto, Mr Cohen said: "After talking with the [Indonesian] President, I am convinced that he is determined to put his country on a sound footing and to have a recovery of confidence in the integrity of the country's financial system". Michel Camdessus, manag-

ing director of the IMF, arrived in Jakarta yesterday, a few hours after Stanley Fischer, his number two, left. An announcement of the new steps that Indonesia will take to comply with IMF demands is expected today.

In Hong Kong, Donald Tsang, the Financial Secretary, said that the Asian crisis might be coming to a close. He told BBC Radio: "I do believe we are in the tail-end of the turmoil in Asia here."

Markets, page 26



Mike Kershaw, left, with Leonard Steinberg who announced Stanley Leisure's first continental partnership

Stanley in line for European expansion

By DOMINIC WALSH

STANLEY Leisure, the casino and bookmaking group, has dipped a toe in the continental betting market forging a partnership with an Italian computer company.

The Italian firm has just appointed its first high street agents to transmit football bets to Stanley's Liverpool headquarters via a computer link in order to circumvent Italy's strict gaming laws.

Mike Kershaw, chief executive, said that although the venture was still at an early stage, it might be developed in other European countries.

Details of the venture emerged as Stanley, whose chairman is Leonard Steinberg, reported a 37 per cent jump in pre-tax profits to £10.1 million in the half-year to October 26. Turnover was up 10.8 per cent to £232.2 million.

The racing division, which has 567 shops, lifted profits by 91 per cent to £7.7 million. The company expects to take at least £3 million on betting on the World Cup this summer.

Casino profits were down 9 per cent to £4.7 million as a result of a £1.5 million-a-year development programme. Earnings per share rose from 4.5p to 6.3p and the interim dividend, payable on February 23, is 1.4p (1.2p).

Tempus, page 26

NAPF attempts to head off legislation

By ALASDAIR MURRAY

THE National Association of Pension Funds yesterday put forward proposals to boost shareholder involvement in corporate governance issues as it attempts to head off the threat of government legislation on the issue.

The NAPF will distribute a checklist to leading companies, asking them to supply background details on issues such as changes to executive pay or company articles three months before annual meetings.

The information will then be passed on to investors via an Internet distribution sys-

tem to be run by Institutional Shareholder Services, the US corporate governance advisory group.

John Rogers, director of investment services, said the proposal should help to increase institutional voting levels by providing investors with better background on contentious issues and improving communication between companies and shareholders.

The NAPF proposal has the backing of the Institute of Chartered Secretaries and Administrators, the trade body for company secretaries.

Tarmac shares dip on volumes warning

By CHRISTINE BUCKLEY, INDUSTRIAL CORRESPONDENT

SHARES in Tarmac, one of Britain's biggest construction companies, fell 10p to 97½p yesterday after the company warned that volumes were likely to remain static.

In a mixed trading update Tarmac said overall volumes were unlikely to change over the next year and that it was not "anticipating significant improvements in market conditions for 1998". The prediction came against expectations of growth in most construction areas except roads.

Tarmac had warned in September that the second half of

its financial year would not be as strong as the first with volumes dipping below expectations. Yesterday it added that robust prices had helped to maintain margins. It also said it would deliver the £40 million of annual cost savings promised following an asset swap with Wimpey in 1996.

Tarmac, which will deliver its full-year results at the end of March, said it had "an increasingly strong platform from which to achieve improvements in margins".

Tempus, page 26

Racal to cut 350 jobs as part of shake-up

RACAL ELECTRONICS plans to cut 350 jobs worldwide, representing some 16 per cent of the global workforce of its Racal Data Group, after. The move results from a decision to cease development of its WINhub family of Internet and remote access systems. The move affects 300 people in America, 50 in Britain and 15 in the Pacific Rim. The company said that details of the financial impact of the decision will be given in its accounts for the year to March 1998.

WINhub is part of the troubled Data Communications which Racal plans to sell as part of a big restructuring package, announced last month. Detailed sales documents are being drafted for potential bidders by Racal's adviser, Goldman Sachs, which was brought on board for the sale last month. In the restructuring Racal will also float its telecommunications division, trimming the company back to its core defence electronics operations. In the half year to December 1997 Racal's Data Communications arm incurred operating losses of £22 million on turnover of £125 million.

M&G lifts net sales

M&G GROUP, the investment company, said its net sales of unit trusts and other funds have turned positive, helped by the improvement in its previously poor investment performance. Michael McLintock, chief executive, told M&G's annual meeting of shareholders that over the past six months the firm's 11 main UK equity funds had outperformed the FT All-share Index, "not by a significant margin". This had helped to stem the tide of investors seeking redemptions, which last year substantially exceeded new sales.

Feld has leave to appeal

ROBERT FELD, the former managing director of Resort Hotels serving an eight-year prison term for fraud, has been granted leave to appeal against the length of his sentence. Feld has also received a fresh grant of legal aid. No date has been set but his case is expected to be considered by the Court of Appeal within the next few weeks. Resort collapsed five years ago with debts of £140 million and Feld was found guilty last April of 12 counts of fraud and forgery. Most of the charges related to a £20 million rights issue in 1992.

Superscape in Lego deal

SUPERSCAPE, the virtual reality computer group, shares of which have fallen from 78p in 1996 to 94½p Tuesday, has completed a deal with Lego, the toy company, worth more than £500,000. It is thought to involve Superscape developing a 3D computer program for Lego, based on its toy products, to be released for the PC home market later this year. The shares rose 18p to 112½p yesterday. Superscape, which doubled pre-tax losses last year to nearly £6 million on turnover of £3.1 million, recently replaced its entire US sales team.

Countryside raises cash

COUNTRYSIDE Properties is raising £11.3 million through two commercial property transactions. It is selling three retail developments in Suffolk, West Sussex and London to SPP, the Swedish institutional investor, for £10 million. Developments in Bury St Edmunds and Chichester are under construction and are pre-let; the third, in Streatham, has been completed. It has also completed the sale and leaseback of an office building in Surrey, for £1.34 million.

Zatto offloads shares

FAMILY trusts associated with Michael Waring, executive chairman of Goodie Durram, have sold 3.5 million shares in the vehicle and equipment hire company, raising £17.15 million, it was announced yesterday. Zatto, a company ultimately controlled by Waring family trusts, sold the shares at 490p each. Yesterday the company's shares rose 22p to 525p, their highest level in more than five years. Zatto still holds 3.6 million shares, 6 per cent of the company.

Dudley Jenkins ahead

DUDLEY JENKINS GROUP, the supplier of mailing lists and databases, is lifting the interim dividend to 2p a share from 1.5p after reporting a rise in pre-tax profits to £1.65 million from £1.3 million for the six months to October 31. Earnings rose to 8.12p a share from 6.35p. The company, which also has a polytechnic division, said turnover improved to £13.4 million from £9.9 million. Tylan Balchey, chairman, said trading in the second half had started well.

Table with 4 columns: Country, Bank, Buy, Sell. Lists exchange rates for various countries including Australia, Austria, Belgium, Canada, Cypriot, Denmark, France, Germany, Greece, Hong Kong, India, Ireland, Italy, Japan, Korea, Malaysia, Netherlands, New Zealand, Norway, Portugal, S Africa, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, Turkey, USA, and UK.

US markets close for King birthday

FROM TUNKU VARADARAJAN IN NEW YORK

BOWING to African-American sentiment, the New York Stock Exchange, the Nasdaq stock market and the American Stock Exchange will for the first time close in observance of Martin Luther King Jr's birthday on Monday.

Although that date was first designated a federal holiday 12 years ago, Wall Street has so far resisted the pressure to pay it formal heed. The main reason for this is the striking absence of black faces from company boards, trading floors, lawyers' firms and accountancy practices. Black people represent only 4.8 per cent of officials and managers, and 6.6 per cent of securities brokers and dealers.

However, after tireless lobbying by black activist groups, including the Rev Jesse Jackson, the world money capital

has finally accepted that it, too, must stop work on January 19.

The energetic Mr Jackson, in fact, is intent on turning the symbolism of the occasion into a source of practical change on Wall Street. Beginning yesterday, he and his coalition are conducting a high-profile conference and fundraising event at the World Trade Centre.

The meetings are intended to promote economic opportunities for blacks and other "disadvantaged" groups, including women. Speakers include President Clinton; Robert Rubin, Treasury Secretary; Alan Greenspan, the Chairman of the Federal Reserve Board; Michael Bloomberg, president of Bloomberg; and James Dimon, co-chairman of Salomon Smith Barney.

Advertisement for The Times newspaper. Features the headline "It's true. Food does taste better out of a newspaper." and an image of a newspaper with a fork and knife. Includes the text "Starting in next Monday's Times, eat out for £5 in more than 600 restaurants around the country." and "CHANGING TIMES".

LEGAL & PUBLIC NOTICES

0171-782 7344

Legal notices section containing various notices from companies and individuals. Includes notices from 'THE JOLLY GLEAVES', 'KOROMAT LIMITED', 'CHARTY COMMISSION', and 'NOTICE OF ADVERTISEMENT'. Each notice contains specific details regarding legal proceedings, company matters, or public information.

Caborn's planning application

Another day, another major government initiative. This time it is the entire planning system that it is to be reformed, with due attention to transport policy en route.

An admirable idea, most would agree. Better still, the enthusiastic Dick Caborn seems to believe that he can accomplish the task in less time than it takes to get an application to open a fast food restaurant past the first hurdle.

After just a few weeks of consultation, he apparently hopes to start making changes in April. He will be doing well if, by then, he has fought his way out from under the landslide of submissions that news of this inquiry will generate.

The current planning system has evolved over 50 years and betrays all the idiosyncrasies that implies. Important industrial investment projects can be delayed for years because of arguments with planners. Developments that have the support of local communities and their elected councillors can be vetoed by government.

A lack of predictability characterises the whole process, imposing unnecessary problems and often huge extra costs, on business. So we must wish Mr Caborn well in his efforts. Unusually, it seems that no business worthy of being appointed to head a task force, no committee of worthies is being established to lend the effort. Perhaps there were so many potential contenders that

the Government decided it would be invidious to select one, or even a few, to pronounce on something so vital.

Official figures show that local planning authorities decide, on average, 64 per cent of applications within eight weeks. The problems, however, come with those applications that eventually go to public inquiry and can take several years to be decided. Property executives at Sainsbury and Tesco have passed from youth to near retirement as some of their treasured schemes have been put under the spotlight.

Speeding up the process is essential, but Mr Caborn is proposing something far more radical, a complete rethink of Britain's planning. This is likely to involve a tightening up of the rules on out of town development.

When he was not espousing the British hamburger, John Gummer, as Environment Minister in the previous Government, endeavoured to stem the rush of retailers and entertainment complexes out of town centres. Labour is likely to follow his lead. While this policy will rapidly put up the value of existing out-of-town sites, it will

have the desired effect of putting life back into town centres only if it is coupled with some serious thinking on issues such as transport.

Perhaps the integrated transport policy of which John Prescott has talked so eloquently will now emerge in more detail. So far, the British public has given ample evidence of its enthusiasm for cars and will need substantial encouragement to abandon them.

Sir Stanley slips a disk

Sales up nearly a quarter, profits up more than a third and the reward is a share price fall of almost a tenth. The unfairness of it is almost enough to make one accept that just because Sir Stanley Kahns suffers from a persecution complex it does not mean that the world is not against him. The

COMMENTARY

by our City Editor

Dixons figures should not have come as a sledgehammer surprise to those who have been tuning in their radar to the high street.

When windfalls were raining down last autumn, putting an extra £36 billion in consumers' pockets, the purveyors of big ticket items were among the main beneficiaries. Under the impression that they should not fritter the money away, many beneficiaries chose to spend their bonus from demutualising building societies and insurers on personal computers.

Whether this equipment is now used for the perusal of improving CD Roms or the playing of violent games, the enthusiasm for the hardware played its part in bolstering Sir Stanley's figures for the first half. But, as Dixons intimated yesterday, the family that bought itself a PC in September was unlikely to treat itself to another one for Christmas.

That sales registered a like-for-like fall of 4 per cent in the eight weeks to January 10 is disappointing but not disastrous. Retailers themselves sour the till results on a daily, sometimes hourly, basis and know the difficulty of extrapolating any long-term pattern from a particular set of returns. As Sir Stanley and his team opted to extend their definition of the Christmas period to January 10, there is a sporting chance that, without the extra week, the figures would have looked even worse.

But that does not mean that the outlook is the dispiriting that the share price collapse indicates. Dixons has been increasing its market share in most areas and expects to be a significant beneficiary of product developments such as digital television.

It might have been easier for the company to put across a more positive spin had it not accompanied the figures with news that its finance director was

moving on, although he knows not where. Without wishing to nourish Sir Stanley's sense of injustice, it would be fair to say that such departures, however much they may be dubbed "amicable", tend to leave the City feeling just a touch uneasy. As its shop windows demonstrate, presentation is an art the company has yet to perfect.

Time for answers, Mr Robinson

Today's Treasury Committee meeting could provide some fascinating revelations, should the Paymaster General turn up. The speculation over Geoffrey Robinson's financial arrangements may have temporarily vanished amidst the bonhomie of Christmas but a few Tories are gearing themselves up for a spot of entertainment now that the House is back in session.

There is serious business for the Treasury Committee to discuss but members will be quite right to insist that the minister in charge of the Government's big idea on revolutionising savings should actually clear up a few loose ends over his own finances

before soldiering on with the ISA. He has yet to reply to questions over the extent of his offshore trust fund — at least £12.5 million but who knows how much more? Neither has he explained how he can have had such apparent influence over some of the investments it has made whilst, theoretically, not being involved in any capacity except as a lucky beneficiary of the generosity of the delightfully named Mme Bourgeois.

Such questions cannot be permanently ignored. If he manages to dodge them now, they will surface again when Coventry City Football Club, in which his trust has shares, comes to the stock market. And every time he pronounces on the subject of a suitable limit for tax relief on savings — £50,000 was his first generous suggestion — he will be vulnerable to attack.

The questions need answers.

Welcome back

FOR SO long mocked as "always £1", Sears shares currently languish at little more than half that. What the company has to say today is unlikely to do anything to lift them. Sales at Selfridges are sufficiently disappointing to dim hopes of it making a glamorous stock market debut. Never mind, no doubt the flags are out to welcome the return of the hundreds of staff it thought it had offloaded to Arthur Andersen.

Lucas clinches £2bn deal for Rolls engine parts

By ADAM JONES

LUCASVARIETY yesterday announced a £2 billion deal with Rolls-Royce to supply parts to a new range of aero engines, while also investing £75 million in the development cost on a risk-sharing basis.

Separately, Rolls-Royce announced that it is forming a repair company with American Airlines to service its engines in the US.

The Lucas Aerospace deal is expected to eventually bring Lucas about £50 million a year in sales and £2 billion in total. It involves supplying systems, including electronic engine controls and fuel metering units, for the Rolls-Royce Trent 800 derivative and the Trent 500 and 600 variants. The Trent 500 is powering the new Airbus A340 that has

recently been given the production go-ahead by the European aircraft manufacturer. Launch customers include Virgin, which is considering innovations such as sleeping compartments.

The Trent 600 has been earmarked for new derivatives of the Boeing 747 range that have not yet been given the green light. A LucasVariety spokesman said there is "a high degree of confidence in the market" that they will be made.

LucasVariety will invest about £75 million in the engine programmes over the next four years and will take between 3 per cent and 5 per cent of the total sales revenues of the three engines, depending on the engine involved. LucasVariety has agreed

similar risk-sharing arrangements with Rolls-Royce before, as have suppliers such as Kawasaki. However, the spokesman said this involved the broadest range of Trent engines so far for Lucas, nor had previous deals involved fuel pumps, which will be supplied to the Trent 500 and 600, or metering units.

Deliveries of the engine variants are expected to start early in the next century. Revenue for LucasVariety is expected to peak at about 2010, with a lot of the money coming from spare parts.

Rolls-Royce's joint venture with American is the second such collaborative engine repair operation, following the establishment of a joint venture with the Hong Kong

Aircraft Engineering Company to service the Asia-Pacific market.

The US repair base will be located at American Airlines' Alliance Maintenance base in Fort Worth, Texas. Initially it will mainly handle the repair of American's RB211-535 and Tay 650 engines.

Rolls-Royce makes a significantly better profit on its aftermarket activities, such as spare parts and repairs, than on the original sale of the engines themselves, but it will not reveal margins.

Rolls-Royce shares fell from 222p to 217p amid sector-wide fears about cancellations of orders from airlines affected by the Asian economic crisis.

Temps, page 26

Festive sales bring no joy for Hamleys

THE CRAZE for Spice Girls dolls and Teletubbies toys failed to produce run-away Christmas sales for Hamleys, the London toy emporium, according to figures released yesterday (Chris Ayres writes).

Hamleys, whose share price nosedived 100p during pre-Christmas jitters, fell a further 3p yesterday to 267½p. Analysts described the sales figures as reasonable but unexciting.

The company reported only a 1.3 per cent rise in like-for-like sales between August and November. Sales during December at its flagship Regent Street store rose by 71 per cent, with other outlets seeing a 5.8 per cent rise.

Overall, group sales enjoyed strong growth helped by the purchase of Toysack, the toy shop chain.

Cadbury extends distribution deals

By JENNIFER HANAWALD

CADBURY SCHWEPES has renewed its contract with Coca-Cola Enterprises (CCE), the US bottler, to distribute Dr Pepper in America.

CCE's two current agreements for Dr Pepper and other drinks such as Schweppes, Canada Dry and Squirt were not due to expire until the end of 1998 and 2000 respectively. The contracts are extended by five and three years. Analysts said the announcement eliminated the fear that Dr Pepper would be squeezed out of the US market.

Gillian Broadley, of Dresner Kleitwort Benson, said: "This is significant because it alleviates the main concern that has been troubling bearish analysts who worried about the group's dependence on a competitor-controlled bottler." Comments from Coca-Cola

and the delisting of some Dr Pepper products had led many analysts to believe that the soft drinks manufacturer was increasingly hostile to the brand.

John Brock, managing director at Cadbury, said: "CCE gets the benefit of the Dr Pepper brand for at least eight years and we get the strength of CCE's distribution network for Dr Pepper and other DPSU brands."

CCE satisfies only 16 per cent of Cadbury Schweppes' bottling requirements in the US, however, and worries persist that the group still faces bottling capacity problems there. Cadbury would not comment on speculation that it may look to expand capacity through the purchase of Beverage America and Select Beverages, but analysts believe some sort of stake is likely.

Warning on profits hits UCG

SHARES of United Carriers Group fell 23p to a low of 49p yesterday after the parcels and freight distribution company said profits would fall substantially below market estimates for 1997 (Martin Barrow writes).

Doug Rogers, chairman, said UCG had suffered the loss of a big contract after being unable to match the terms of a rival bid. It also incurred unexpected costs in meeting demand for next-day delivery over the peak Christmas period.

Mr Rogers said profits would now be only slightly ahead of the £2 million profit in 1996. UCG is likely to break even in the first half of 1998.

The company promised to maintain the final dividend at 1.8p a share, making a total of 3.5p (3.4p).

Budgens seeks growth from upmarket format

By JENNIFER HANAWALD

UPMARKET growth is the way forward for Budgens, the high street food retailer that reported first half pre-tax profit up 15.1 per cent to £5.8 million yesterday.

In the six months to November 9, the group spent £3.2 million refitting ten of its shops, which specialise in fresh food. It plans to give a further 11 the new look in the current half.

John von Spreckelsen, chief executive, said the move upmarket did not mean rising costs for the consumer.

Cheaper goods, because of the strong pound and benefits from a buying consortium along with higher margins for fresh food allowed the group to raise margins from 3.6 per cent to 4 per cent, while customers enjoyed steady prices. The group also spent £5.8 million on 57 7-Eleven stores which it hopes to bring to profitability through better supplier terms and its own expertise in fresh foods.

Another petrol forecourt was opened in the period, but there were no new Budgens stores until the current half, which will see a total of five added before the end of the year.

On a like-for-like basis, Budgens sales rose 1.5 per cent. Better margins and contributions from acquisitions lifted earnings per share from 2.3p to 2.7p and the dividend was raised 12.5 per cent to 0.45p.

The group also said that overall sales in the first eight weeks of the second half, to January 4, rose 23 per cent.



John von Spreckelsen reported a rise in pre-tax profit

Sketchley operations may be sold

Sketchley yesterday confirmed that it may sell its high street dry cleaning and SisaSnaps chains, with the existing management expected to launch a bid. The company is understood to be in talks with NatWest Equity Partners, the venture capital concern.

John Jackson, chairman of Sketchley, is understood to be looking to axe the troubled high street chains to let the company concentrate on its ARM cable-laying business. The textile services operation may also be sold.

Lowes rises 71%

Packaging was the high scorer last year for Robert H Lowe, outshining its sportswear division for the first time. Acquisitions in both divisions and better margins in packaging boosted pre-tax profits 71 per cent to £4.1 million. On a like-for-like basis, operating profit was up a more modest 15 per cent and turnover was almost flat. Earnings per share rose 20 per cent to 2.76p. The full-year dividend will be raised from 0.3p to 0.405p.

Whitbread up

Whitbread, the brewing and leisure group, said yesterday that trading over Christmas and the new year had been comfortably ahead of last year as shoppers took advantage of early high street sales. The company again declined to comment on rumours that it is about to close or sell two of its five breweries. The shares lost 8p to close at 870p.

Shandwick in talks with US group

By RAYMOND SNOODY, MEDIA EDITOR

SHANDWICK INTERNATIONAL, the public relations group, is believed to be in talks with True North, the US advertising group, about the possibility of a merger or joint venture.

Shandwick declined to say yesterday whether it was in talks with True North, the company which used to be known as Foote Cone and Belding, but confirmed that it was holding preliminary discussions with selected major business partners.

The UK company said that the talks

involved a wide range of options from a potential partner taking on a substantial minority investment right up to a full takeover bid.

True North recently completed a bitterly contested £268 million takeover of its rival Bossell and it already has a small residual stake in Shandwick. Shandwick shares, in the doldrums for months last year, recently started picking up, and yesterday rose 3½p to 52p.

Yesterday Shandwick announced a reorganisation of UK operations. These will now operate as a single enterprise, integrating the management of seven

different profit centres. All the separate names of five existing Shandwick-branded companies will be replaced by a single brand: Shandwick.

In addition another Shandwick international company in the UK, Welbeck Golin/Harris, will become Shandwick Welbeck at the beginning of May. Paragon Communications will be retained as a separate brand.

Lord Chadlington, the Shandwick chairman and founder, has promised to give more information about the options facing the company after the end of its close period.



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Welfare euphemisms are still multiplying. When asked at Question Time yesterday whether means-testing was a disincentive to work, savings and honesty, the Prime Minister said: "What I think is important is to ensure that any reform of the welfare state helps those people genuinely in need. Reform is needed, he explained, because poverty is still rising along with spending. "We will look at the issue of means-testing and insurance benefits and categorical benefits within that context."

This is not a message calculated to bring the cheers as Tony Blair starts his national roadshow to sell a welfare debate. A more popular slogan might be: "Let's cut taxes on the poor". It would also make more sense.

One of Whitehall's myriad task forces is looking at the endless topic of taxes and benefits, no doubt with the usual good intention of easing the high marginal tax rates produced when the two systems grate against each other. But the debate virtually ignores a

Minimum wage is the key to taxes

much more important new initiative: a statutory minimum wage. One reason may be that the minimum wage is a nursing of the Department of Trade and Industry, not the Treasury or Social Security. Another may be that the policy is a relic, a sop to old Labour and trade unions. To new Labour, it is an embarrassment.

The Treasury is arguing most strongly for George Bain's Low Pay Commission to name a low figure in May, not employment ministers fearing job losses. The public sector is the nation's biggest user of low-paid labour, either directly or, more usually, via service contractors.

There is another, more compelling case, for the minimum wage to start at the lowest credible level, between, say, £3 and £3.50 an hour. Far from being a fringe embarrassment, the minimum wage is bound to become a key factor driving the personal tax system as well as welfare benefits. In other countries that is not the case. In Britain, however, a wage floor is being foisted on business at a late stage, when its moral force will not be accepted unquestioningly. Extremes aside, employers who pay low wage rates do not feel they are exploiting people, but creating jobs. Among those that have to compete with the outside world, they also know that higher wages will inevitably come at the cost of some jobs. Even the Government accepts that.

There are two compelling arguments for a law. One is that taxpayers are fed up with having to subsidise low pay. The more elevated moral crusade naturally features more in public. No-one should be asked to work for less pay than can fund a decent basic permanent living standard. Employers who are affected will

apply to a universal minimum wage paid in accordance with law by private employers.

Once this is accepted, the minimum wage and a much higher basic income tax allowance would form the basis for reforming the benefit system. If that is combined with transferable earned income credits based on need, as favoured by Gordon Brown, you have a fair basis to make a range of benefits taxable instead of being crudely means-tested. The overlap between tax and benefits would shrink, public spending would fall and, for those who dream, give room to ease the total tax burden.

The legal minimum should have one further, equally significant role. It will be the natural cornerstone for the fairer tax system that the Chancellor has both promised and rejected. Mr Brown is stuck with a commitment not to raise income tax rates. Unless the

minimum wage is no more than about £2 an hour, it will oblige him to raise allowances if he is not to double-cross employers. But a higher basic allowance costs the Exchequer more than any other kind of income tax cut.

To pay for tax cuts at the bottom, people higher up the scale will have to face a higher marginal rate: perhaps 40 per cent for those just above the ceiling for national insurance contributions and up to 50 per cent further up. The pill might be easier to swallow if higher rates kicked in at multiples of the minimum wage. The top rate, for instance, might begin at ten times a normal working year at the minimum pay rate. The threshold for inheritance tax might be 50 times that figure, the wealth of two generations. That would surely count as fairer.

Tax thresholds would rise in line with the minimum wage, so top earners would have a permanent fiscal incentive to raise the living standards of those at the bottom. What a fine example of a society where *people care for each other.*



GRAHAM SEALJEANT
Under present rules, tax starts at about £5 a week, with part-relief for married couples up to about £15 a week. A £3.20 an hour minimum would produce £128 for a 40 hour week. Unless the tax thresholds are brought up to the minimum wage level, the Treasury will be directly responsible for job losses as well as negating the purpose of the law. Even in America, where a federal minimum wage, now about £3.20 an hour, has long been part of the furniture, a married couple with one earner would need to have a noticeably higher income before they paid federal income tax.

El Tel banned from the directors' box as the DTI gets its man

The men from the ministry do not give up easily. Jon Ashworth reports

The wheels turn slowly at the Department of Trade and Industry, but they turn with an inexorable momentum. Terry Venables is the latest in a string of high-profile individuals to discover just how tenacious the DTI can be in pursuing its prey.

For Venables, who has had the threat of a DTI ban hanging over him for more than two years, to see the affair reach its conclusion must come as something of a relief. Banned from serving as a company director for seven years, he can at least pursue his sporting interests with one fewer legal issue to distract him. Nigel Griffiths, the Competition and Consumer Affairs Minister, even paid him an oblique compliment, including him with Britain's national heroes, in delivering a stiff rap over the knuckles.

Hero or not, the DTI case proved a damning indictment against Venables. Investigators homed in on his time as chief executive of Tottenham Hotspur, the Premiership football club, his involvement with Scribes West, a private club on Kensington High Street in West London, and his stewardship of Edenote, a trading company that was used for property and financial deals before its collapse in 1994.

Venables was alleged to have paid a "bribe" to business associates, falsified accounts and shown a repeated disregard for company law. He had dealings with Landhurst Leasing, one-time backer of the Brabham Formula One motor racing team, whose chairman, Ted Ball, was sentenced to three years in October for taking kickbacks.

Venables was accused of allowing a bankrupt business associate, Eddie Ashby, to help him to run Tottenham Hotspur. Ashby had recently been released from prison, having been convicted of run-



Terry Venables, centre, and, clockwise from top right, Tony Berry, John Gunn, Frank Warren and Roger Levitt

ning a company in defiance of a court ban.

A damning indictment, indeed — but one which may serve to further enhance Venables' status in the eyes of his adoring fans. The ban, while a reputational blow, will not prevent him continuing in his career as a football manager, which includes coaching the Australian national side.

Only this week, Venables relinquished control of Portsmouth football club, accepting more than £300,000 for his 51 per cent stake. He was chairman of Portsmouth, which is languishing at the bottom of the first division having suffered 17 defeats in 25 matches.

Venables coached the England team to the semi-finals of the European Championships in 1996, before stepping down to concentrate on his impending court battles. Several libel actions remain pending, including one against the BBC's *Panorama*. An earlier case involving Alan Sugar, the Spurs chairman, was settled in October 1996, with Venables

paying about £100,000 in damages plus costs. He agreed to destroy unsold copies of his autobiography, which contained unflattering remarks about Sugar.

Sport provides a running theme when it comes to clashes with the DTI. Two years ago, proceedings were launched against Frank Warren, the boxing promoter, over his dealings with the London Arena in London's Docklands. The venue failed in 1991 with debts of more than £20 million. It reopened in 1994.

The common link, once again, was Landhurst Leasing, which advanced more than £300,000 in loans to the London Arena. Warren was banned by the DTI for seven years in March 1996. Significantly, he did not accept all the allegations made against him, but decided not to fight the ban because of the pressure of work commitments.

Sport came up again — if circuitously — in the case of Roger Levitt, the former life assurance salesman, who re-

ceived a seven year ban in 1993. The DTI accused Levitt of acting as a shadow director of a boxing promotion company, but made a spectacular hash of bringing him back from New York to answer the charges. Levitt denies wrongdoing, and is set to sue the DTI for wrongful arrest. Armed with his trademark cigar, he is pursuing a career in America as a boxing promoter.

Spurs provided a link in the case of Tony Berry, former chairman and chief executive of Blue Arrow, who survived attempts by the DTI to disqualify him from serving as a director. The DTI decided not to proceed on the advice of legal counsel. Berry, a director of Spurs, complained that the fight to clear his name had cost him £1.1 million in legal fees.

Fewer than 40 individuals have received the maximum 15-year ban in the 11 years since the Company Directors' Disqualification Act (1986) came into force. Those who have

include Peter Clowes, former head of the Barlow Clowes gilts empire. Wallace Duncan Smith, the disgraced City merchant banker, was banned for 12 years, and Robert Miller, former head of Dunsdale Securities, for ten.

Disqualification proceedings are outstanding against John Gunn, the former chairman of British & Commonwealth. Peter Goldie, the former BBC managing director, was banned for five years in 1996. It had little effect, since he had started a new career as a lecturer at Oxford University. Action is pending against Stephen Hincliffe, who ran the Facia shoes group. Proceedings are in hand against nine former senior executives of Barings, the failed merchant bank. Those under scrutiny include Andrew Tuckey, the former deputy chairman.

About 1,100 bans were imposed last year by the DTI, which is tackling the problem of rogue directors with renewed vigour. Griffiths has singled out "phoenix" direc-

tors — individuals who reinvent themselves, leaving a trail of creditors in their wake.

Whether the bans add up to much is another matter. Venables and Warren, for instance, can quite legitimately continue their sporting interests, even if their wider business activities are curtailed. The DTI says it believes its efforts, on the whole, have the desired effect.

Directors who are banned and are then found to be working as "consultants" will be sailing close to the wind if they are held to be involved directly or indirectly with the management of the company in question. The DTI wants the public to blow the whistle on suspected miscreants, and has published a whistleblowers' hotline: (0845) 601 3546.

Events leave Venables clear to pursue new interests, including, potentially, managing the Northern Ireland football squad. Born in Dagenham, Essex, he played at every international level for England. His professional club career began with Chelsea in 1959, playing 202 games for the club over the next five years. He joined Spurs in 1965, and later did stints with Queens Park Rangers and Crystal Palace.

Venables turned manager, reviving the fortunes of Crystal Palace and QPR, then moving to Spain, where he led Barcelona through a glorious run, winning him his "El Tel" nickname. He guided Spurs to FA Cup Final victory in 1991, and later spent two years as chief executive, before he was removed from the post by Sugar in 1993. He was appointed England coach the following year.

Things turned sour, with Venables claiming to be the victim of a "coordinated and organised" campaign aimed at discrediting him. A police investigation into allegations that he paid a £50,000 "bribe" to Brian Clough, the former Nottingham Forest manager, was dropped because of lack of evidence.

Venables is nothing if not a survivor, and the DTI ban may well be a blessing in disguise. With the matter settled, he will be hoping to have heard the last of Edenote and Landhurst Leasing, not to mention "bungs" in motorway service stations. For Gunn, Tuckey and Hincliffe, the wheels at the DTI have some way yet to roll.

Managing a way around the gibbering self-help gurus

Martin Waller gets to grips with some gobbledegook by Tom Peters

Management self-help books always remind me of Basil's cruel jibe from *Fawlty Towers*: "Name Sybil Fawlty. Specialist subject: the bleedin' obvious." These are books that are brightly clad but largely indistinguishable volumes with titles like *The Principle Pinnacle* and *The Organisation of Innovation* that have now migrated from the specialist business bookshop to the airport lounge, where they offer stressed-out executives the opportunity to improve themselves and their career prospects on long flights rather than fritter the time away on non-essentials like sleep.

Most are unreadable. Most, one must therefore assume, remain unread, to be placed in a prominent position in said executive's office when he or she has touched down again, corporate lares and penates that by their very presence bestow an aura of managerial excellence on the occupier. Next time you are in such an office, try this simple test. Look for a cracked spine.

Tom Peters is the guru of management self-help. He can claim to have invented the genre, with books such as *In Search of Excellence* and *Thriving on Chaos*, both published more than a decade ago. They may, then, have had something to say, when the subject was fresh. But there is an inevitable law of diminishing returns. Management as a science, if it is a science, has not changed sufficiently in the intervening years for there to be much new to say. Old ideas, old heresies, must be repackaged. When the old ideas were never terribly original, the heresies never too threatening, they can upon re-invention look threadbare indeed.

Peters' latest, *The Circle of Innovation*, is unreadable and not solely because of its content. It is written in an infuriating montage of SUD-DEN, apparently RANDOM CAPITALS, a plethora of different type-faces, and lots of exclamation marks!!!

Worse, whole pages are devoted to a handful of well-spaced words, expressing one simple idea. There are calligraphic diagrams, of circles and arrows mainly. There are quirky, unnecessary illustrations — page 115 has two men wearing fedoras sticking their tongues out at you. Look at the accompanying text, all 120-odd words of it on that one page. "If you have two people who think the same, fire one of them," it says. This is the only thought on offer, patently a daft one. The two men ... well, they are acting alike, are they not?

Likewise one double-page spread, with just six words this time: "Hire for diversity, train for whatever." Over an illustration of a racially mixed group of young people. Try hiring for anything else, in these politically correct times.

This is Marshall McLuhan gone mad, the desire to transcend the mere written word by communicating your ideas in images taken to its gibbering extreme. Or perhaps, whispers the cynic, to bulk out some less than transcendent

ideas with an awful lot of white paper and a few cuttings from the picture library. And now let us consider these ideas. This is where the difficulty sets in. There is little or no coherent structure to *The Circle of Innovation*. It starts with 15 basic thoughts, to each of which is devoted a chapter. These range from the deliberately provocative — "Destruction is Cool", "We are all Michelangelo's" — through the sentimentally McLuhanesque — "The System is the Solution" — to Basil Fawlty's bleedin' obvious. "It is ... THE AGE OF THE BRAND! Anything can be branded" and "Become a Connoisseur of Talent".

Turn to the individual chapters and again, there is no structure, just swirling sound and visibilities. Consider the System that we are told is the Solution. "The ethereal organization/disembodied organization/disintermediated organization/transparent organization (Chapter 7) demands great systems. And therein lies the rub. Most systems are jury-rigged, bogged down in detail (even post-re-engineering). So we need new ways of thinking what it means.

The points Peters is trying to put across, when stripped out of the dizzying graphics and broken down into mere ideas, turn out to be the usual shibboleths of our insecure age. We need fewer middle managers today, so if you are one, try to be indispensable. If you are a well-known figure, a Branson or a Roddick, it helps to shift your firm's product. In a service industry, you should provide a better service than your competitors.

Peters is indeed a guru. The guru's words must be incomprehensible to outsiders. That is their appeal; they mark out the initiated from the unenlightened. Admit your guru is gibbering and you lose your place among the elect.

In Peters' case, it is not so much that the Emperor has no clothes, but that he whirrs, he dances, he postures so fast that it is impossible to tell if he is naked or not.

□ *The Circle of Innovation*, by Tom Peters, is published by Hodder & Stoughton on January 15, price £20 hardback.

Summit else

ON MONDAY we will learn who will be the keynote speakers at this year's World Economic Forum at Davos at the end of the month. It looks as if Britain will be out-gunned by our European neighbours. The one heavyweight name already confirmed is Helmut Kohl — all 20 stone of him. Lionel Jospin, the French Prime Minister, has declined to attend, and Jacques Chirac, the President, regards such gatherings as beneath him. But Jospin is sending the Finance and Foreign Affairs

Ministers. A call to our own politicians, however, garners only one name, that of Gordon Brown.

He is honour-bound to attend, but Robin Cook, Foreign Secretary, has pleaded a prior engagement, although I cannot say if this hides his well-known antipathy to Brown or merely pique over his travelling arrangements. Tony Blair's movements are never revealed for security reasons. One would think such a gathering might lead itself to a little Blairie sermoeising, but it seems that he is unlikely to be there.

Leaving poor Gordon to fend for himself, last year the Tories fielded both Chancellor and Foreign Secretary. It does prompt the question, however, should our politicians be at home running things, or off at high-flown economic summits where they can do less damage?

□ THERE is another explanation for the 10 per cent share price fall in *Diagona Group* yesterday, after a *Christmas trading update* that was not that awful. Some analysts complained they were inconvenienced at the briefing by being refused a copy of the slide presentation until afterwards, which meant they had to scribble away as they went along. This left them ill disposed to the shares, it seems. Spoiled brats.



Virtual victory

ROBIN GUENIER, our resident Cassandra over the millennium bug, has been voted the man of 1997 in a poll of readers of *Computer Weekly*. He murdered all those US computer moguls, including Bill Gates. I would hate to detract from Guenier's victory, but so did the character who came in second, with more than a fifth of the votes. And Lara Croft is not even a real person.

Buggy bother

SUNLEIGH, maker of MacLaren pushchairs, has got its wheels well

and truly locked — although how you make a financial disaster out of selling such an overpriced product defeats me. The shares are almost worthless, and the banks have paid out more rope in return for fund-raising that will require the company's existing 30 per cent shareholder to take at least 50 per cent. And who is this perceptive investor? Albin Consortium Fund, last spotted on these shores taking a thumping loss at Ronson, the flickering lighter maker. Albin, that is, revealed in this column to be none other than Jack Lyons, of Guinness scandal fame, and Farzad Rastegar, an Iranian-born businessman. They are again having to pour money down a black hole, it seems. Nice to see "Sir" Jack's eye for an investment has not failed him.

another conference, on currencies this time, on February 11. There are fears of "conference fatigue".

Cybergestion

The Inland Revenue's computer system at Telford, Shropshire, had the cybernetic equivalent of a nervous breakdown yesterday. The engineers were called in. No one seems sure what went wrong, but I fear the looming January 31 deadline, and the prospect of having to calculate all 3.5 million outstanding forms itself, may have taken its toll of the machine.

MARTIN WALLER



Hector and Rory McGrath are suffering a computer glitch

work hard. play hard. bastard.

jan 30

ACCOUNTANCY

Focus is shifting to prelims

Roger Hussey and Sarah Woolfe see a knock-on effect on full accounts

The Accounting Standards Board (ASB) has recently issued proposals for preliminary accounts and interim reports. These proposals are a substantial improvement on the current Stock Exchange regulations, which require the provision of little more than profit-related information. As well as offering guidance, the ASB's proposals also raise some interesting issues. In this article we speculate on the impact these initiatives may have on the future direction of financial reporting.

The first issue is how close ASB proposals for best practice are to current practice. We have conducted a number of surveys that give the answer to this. In 1992 we examined the interim reports of a random sample of 223 companies for the Institute of Chartered Accountants in England and Wales (ICAEW). This year we have obtained the half-year reports for 1997 from 134 of these companies. Over that five-year period the practice of providing balance sheets rose from only 20 per cent to 87 per cent of companies.

We also found that 63 per cent of companies included a cashflow statement last year, while 16 per cent stated total recognised gains and losses. Therefore, as far as provision of information is concerned, it appears that companies have

already been making significant progress in the direction now recommended by the ASB. Interims are closer to an abridged version of the annual report than the Stock Exchange requires.

As far as timing is concerned, 34 per cent of companies issued their interim reports in 1992 within 60 days of the period end. In 1997 this increased to 41 per cent but, more importantly, the average time in issuing the interim report fell from 66 days to 62 days. This has been achieved by a substantial reduction in the reporting lag by some of the more tardy companies. We expect that within the next few years a substantial number of companies will be able to achieve the 60 days recommended by the ASB.

With regard to preliminary announcements, we examined 148 sample documents for 1993-94 for the ICAEW. We found that 60 per cent of companies included some form of balance sheet and 28 per cent provided a cashflow statement. Only 21 per cent of companies, however, were issuing their prelims within 60 days of the year end. We expect the ASB's proposals for a 60-day lag to be controversial in the future of financial reporting. First, with interims we found in 1992 that only 3 per cent of documents mentioned auditor involvement. But last year 28 per cent of our sample included an auditor's review



Roger Hussey expects a shift to audited half-yearly reports

repeat the ambiguous phrase of the Stock Exchange that they should be agreed with the auditors. Our research indicates that current auditing practices for interims and preliminary reports depart from current requirements and this could affect the future of financial reporting. First, with interims we found in 1992 that only 3 per cent of documents mentioned auditor involvement. But last year 28 per cent of our sample included an auditor's review

They reason that the market is more concerned with the reliability of the information than its timeliness.

This issue of auditor involvement brings us to our last question. What other changes might we expect, particularly for the larger companies? In the light of the evidence it appears that we are moving towards a summary report and accounts every six months with some form of auditor involvement. If so, do we really need some companies to issue a preliminary announcement, the full report and accounts and a summary financial statement?

Although it could be argued that the various documents have different purposes and different audiences, this is not borne out by their content and audit status. Either we have one question too many or we need to rethink entirely the annual reporting package, a task that is on the ASB's agenda.

It may be that the full report and accounts has now grown too large and complex to be other than a reference document, which is not time specific and used by the few. The continuing financial communication needs of by far the greatest number of users may be best met by an audited summary half-yearly report that provides a frequent and reliable source of information.

Roger Hussey is Deloitte & Touche Professor of Financial Communications and Sarah Woolfe is Project Research Assistant. Both are at Bristol Business School.

A poker game with billions to play for

WHEN you visit the university campus that serves as the training college for Arthur Andersen outside Chicago you tend to be shown the memorabilia of the firm's proud history over the past 85 years. You can see, for example, the mug out of which the original Arthur Andersen poured himself buttermilk to sustain him as he worked to build up his business. There is also a touchscreen system through which you can summon up the biography of any past partner. None of them, you discover, have been rotten eggs. In fact, it transpires that they have all been proud to be Arthur Andersen people and devoted to the task of building the world's finest firm.

But 1998 is likely to be the year when the ecologies stop. The language fellow partners have used to describe each other since the split in the firm went public last month would not fit into the Andersen historical ethos, particularly in the hinterland of Chicago where the ratio of churches to people is among the highest in the land. Before the split when the rivalry between Andersen Consulting and Arthur Andersen was simply simmering, the language was downhome American.

The head of Andersen Consulting, George Shaheen, would make remarks about how "it's difficult for two brothers to date the same gal" to get across his point that Arthur Andersen was muscling in on his consulting patch. And the then managing partner of Arthur Andersen, Dick Measelle, would play the bridge of Andersen Consulting, he would say, "We created them. They're like Adam's Rib to us." But the problem was a simple one of money. During 1997 the precious infant started, for the first time, to earn revenues that were larger than its parent. The consequences were inevitable. It was time to fly the coop. And this is what Andersen Consulting, in a series of dramatic actions, is trying to do.

The main issues are simple. The parent body, Arthur Andersen, has an agreement under which Andersen Consulting pays it about \$150 million (£90 million) a year under an income-sharing deal dating back to the original formation of the consulting firm as a separate business unit in 1989. Now that Andersen Consulting is more revenue than its parent this arrangement riddles.

But it has been the subject of lengthy negotiations, particularly at the Paris meeting of the whole partnership in May last year when a vote of 93 per cent to keep the firm

together was recorded. So when Jim Wadia, global head of Arthur Andersen, arrived in San Francisco in mid-December to deliver a new offer to a meeting of Andersen Consulting partners he felt that the process was still continuing. He proposed that the cost-sharing process should be frozen at the current rate from September 1998. In other words, all the upside growth from that date on would be Consulting's property and Arthur Andersen would just be receiving the frozen payment as recognition of the fact that without Arthur Andersen there would have been no Andersen Consulting.

As one partner put it: "Would Andersen Consulting be a \$7 billion business if it didn't leverage off 85 years of Arthur Andersen's effort and the name? With all due respect, a firm which had started in 1859 with the name of Robert Bruce would have been unlikely to reach \$7 billion of revenue by 1997." Apart from the slur on my good name, you would have to agree.

Wadia put his proposals to the partners in Andersen Consulting on December 15. Here the timing gets interesting. They said they would have a decision for him on December 17. He flew back to Chicago to await it. At 9am Paris time on the 17th, at which point it is around 11pm the previous day in San Francisco, Andersen Consulting deposited 150 copies of its claim to put the whole arrangement into arbitration with the International Chamber of Commerce in Paris.

Arthur Andersen was not told of this. It was an attempt at shock tactics. The poker game had started. And this is why senior Consulting partners bellow the mantra of "enough is enough" and senior Andersen partners tell you that the result will be a street fight and that while Consulting might have thought it would roll over and reach an agreement the opposite is true.

"This is hard-ass arbitration," said one senior Arthur Andersen partner last week. What is at stake is enormous. Under the existing agreement Consulting would have to come up with a \$10 billion severance payment if it leaves unilaterally and would have to give up the Andersen name. But the way it has gone about it has created immense bitterness. As a poker game it is a hard one to call. Consulting has the most to lose. And the affair has shattered the Andersen reputation for maintaining the strength of culture that had driven it to become the world's biggest professional services firm.



ROBERT BRUCE

Mitchell's Royal petition

AUSTIN MITCHELL, the Labour MP and veteran critic of the accountancy profession, has sent the Queen a petition complaining that the Association of Chartered Certified Accountants is guilty of "irregularities, abuses and violations of not only its Royal Charter and its bylaws, but also of decent and civilised standards of public behaviour". Mitchell's covering letter "urges Her Majesty to

exercise her legal and moral duties and investigate the affairs of the ACCA". The Queen perhaps will take comfort from one Labour minister who is fond of saying: "We all have a soft spot for Austin — it's a bog in Scotland."

Flying partners

THE current arbitration battle between Andersen Consulting

and Arthur Andersen over who owes what and to whom is producing moments of light relief. Vernon Ellis, Andersen Consulting's managing director, Europe, Mid-East, Africa and India, settled down to a flight to Los Angeles this week and found that Philip Randall, managing partner of Arthur Andersen in the UK, was in the seat next to him. They insist they had an amicable

time. And that the hostesses at no point had to arbitrate.

Boo to Boot

THE forthcoming clash between the Accounting Standards Board and the Treasury over the similarity of the Private Finance Initiative to the old outlawed creative accounting practice of off-balance sheet financing is as nothing to a spat

in Australia. The system down under is known as BOO, which leaves the crucial initial off the real name: Build, Own, Operate and Transfer.

AS THE self-assessment deadline looms there are signs that tax advisers are trying to be conciliatory. The Chartered Institute of Taxation this week made the immediate past-chairman of the Inland Revenue, Sir Anthony Battisill, an honorary fellow.

ROBERT BRUCE

ANY OTHER BUSINESS

Court of Appeal

Negligence of imprudent lender

Platform Home Loans v Oyston Shipways Ltd and Others. Before Lord Justice Morritt, Lord Justice Thorpe and Lord Justice Potter. [Judgment December 19].

An imprudent lending policy could constitute contributory negligence for the purposes of section 1(1) of the Law Reform (Contributory Negligence) Act 1945 in the case of a loan made in reliance on the negligent valuation of the security for it.

The Court of Appeal so held in a reserved judgment in dismissing a cross-appeal brought by the plaintiff lender, Platform Home Loans Ltd and allowing appeals brought by the defendant valuers. (i) Bernard Thorpe, a former firm; (ii) David Browning Allen and (iii) Stephen John Kitchin, against the decision of Lord Justice Jacob on July 29, 1996 when he found that the valuers had been negligent in their valuation of 9 Carpenter Road, Edgbaston, Birmingham, but that the lender had been contributorily negligent.

Mr Nicholas Patten, QC and Mr Andrew P. D. Walker for the lender; Mr Simon Berry, QC, for the first defendant; Mr Patrick Lawrence for the second to fourth defendants.

LORD JUSTICE MORRITT said that in *South Australia Asset Management Corporation v York Montague Ltd* [The Times June 24, 1996; [1997] AC 19] the House of Lords decided that the liability of a lender to a valuer who negligently valued the intended security for the loan was limited to such part of the loss sustained by the lender as fell within the scope of the valuer's duty of care. This was usually the difference between the amount of the valuation and the true value of the property at the time when the valuation was made.

The present appeals raised issues of general importance as to the application of the Law Reform (Contributory Negligence) Act 1945

in the assessment of the liability of the valuer.

Mr Justice Jacob had considered that the imprudence of the lender in deciding whether to make the loan at all was a contributory negligence so as to reduce the liability of the valuer for the consequences of his negligent overvaluation. The lender claimed that he was wrong to do so.

In accordance with that conclusion, Mr Justice Jacob had assessed the damages payable by the valuers by reference to the date of the sale of the security, deducted therefrom 20 per cent for the contributory negligence of the lender. The judge added to the balance interest from the date of the sale of the security to the date of his judgment. In accordance with those calculations the amount for which he held the valuers liable was £385,723.22.

After his order had been drawn up, the House of Lords decided *Nykredit Mortgage Bank plc v Edward Erdman Group Ltd (No 2)* [The Times December 3, 1997; [1997] 1 WLR 1627]. All parties were agreed that the assessment of damages by Mr Justice Jacob by reference to the date of the sale of the security was not in accordance with *Nykredit* and so the assessment of damages should be re-determined in accordance with *Nykredit*. The only issue in that respect was whether on such reassessment the judge would be entitled to add different rates of interest from those used on the original assessment.

The facts lay within a small compass. The first and second defendants were valuers and the third and fourth defendants partners in the second defendant. Mr Mantzour Hussain owned the property. In August 1990 each of the valuers independently valued the property at £1.5 million.

On October 12, 1990, Platform lent Mr Hussain £1,050,195. From early 1993 Mr Hussain failed regularly to pay the full amounts

due from him to Platform over the mortgage. On February 16, 1994 Platform having obtained possession on December 3, 1993 sold the property for £435,000. By his judgment, Mr Justice Jacob, applying *South Australia Asset Management*, found that both valuers had been negligent and that the true value of the property in August was £1 million. He also held that Platform had failed to mitigate its loss.

The valuers also sought to reduce their liability in reliance on various matters alleged to constitute contributory negligence. Mr Justice Jacob upheld two of them.

The first related to the lending policy of Platform whereby it was prepared to lend on a non-status basis 70 per cent of the value of the security. The second aspect of contributory negligence, as found by Mr Justice Jacob, arose from the fact that the application form required Mr Hussain to state the date of his original purchase and the price he paid; yet he failed to complete the section on the form.

The judge assessed both findings of contributory negligence together and assessed the total contribution at 20 per cent. He observed that the "real determining factor" for the level of the loan was the valuations themselves.

Platform did not dispute that the judge was entitled to find contributory negligence in the second respect, it was suggested at 5 per cent. However, Platform contended no perceived imprudence in its lending policy could constitute contributory negligence so as to reduce the liability of the valuers.

The issue was what, in the case of a loan made in reliance on the negligent valuation of the security for it, was the damage for the purposes of section 1(1) of the 1945 Act?

Was it the overall transaction loss sustained by the lender in consequence of the loan as contended by the valuers or was it that part of the overall loss consequent on and so attributable to the negligent valuation?

It was convenient to attach labels to the different elements of the loss sustained by the lender.

The overall loss from the loan consisted of loss B (loss C) the lender would have sustained had he not lent on a non-status basis. Loss A was the loss which he could not recover from the valuer.

Equal to or included within that loss was loss B (loss C) the lender would have sustained had he not lent on a non-status basis. Loss A was the loss which he could not recover from the valuer.

It seemed to his Lordship that section 1(1) of the 1945 Act was applicable so as to justify the conclusion to which Mr Justice Jacob reached.

In the present case, the damage for the purposes of the section was loss A. That loss was sustained by Platform partly as a result of its own fault and partly, as to loss B, as a result of the fault of the valuers.

The claim against the valuers, although limited to loss B was none the less a claim in respect of loss A for it was an element in or ingredient of that loss. On that basis the court was entitled to apportion the damages in respect of that claim by reference to the valuers' share in the responsibility of loss A.

For those reasons his Lordship would dismiss the appeal of Platform to reduce the liability of the valuers on account of the imprudent lending policy of Platform.

So far as the appeal of the valuers was concerned, the only issue to be determined was whether having carried out the requisite reassessment in awarding statutory interest the judge was limited to the rates of interest he adopted on the earlier computation.

Platform submitted that no ground had been shown by the valuers which would entitle the court to interfere with the exercise of the judge's discretion.

The reason for the submission was not hard to see. Between October 1990 and January 1995 interest rates declined by nearly two thirds.

Platform's submission would be rejected. Since it was agreed that it was necessary to make a reassessment of the liability of the valuers the quantum of damage might change and the date from which the statutory interest became payable might also change.

The judge had to be free to adopt different rates in those different circumstances. Thus the appeal of the valuers would be allowed.

Lord Justice Thorpe and Lord Justice Potter agreed.

Solicitors: Rosling King, William Davis Meltzer; Dibb Lupton Alsop.

Martins v Marks and Spencer plc. Before Lord Justice Beldam, Lord Justice Hutchison and Lord Justice Mummery. [Judgment December 17].

There were lessons to be learned from a case where the Employment Appeal Tribunal rightly criticised and overturned a unanimous finding by an industrial tribunal that Marks and Spencer plc had racially discriminated against an applicant for employment.

The decision of the industrial tribunal was legally flawed. Among other matters it made a fundamental error of law in adding itself and answering the wrong question: a different question from that required by the Race Relations Act 1976, that is, whether the complainant had been treated less favourably than others on racial grounds.

The tribunal had not attempted to make the statutory requirement between the treatment of her complaint and the treatment of a person of the same age of a different racial group with similar experience and qualification applying for the same job. Instead it had simply asked itself whether there was bias on the part of the interviewers and concluded that there was.

The Court of Appeal so stated in a reserved decision dismissing an appeal by Ms Adell Martins against a decision of the Employment Appeal Tribunal, on March 26, 1996, allowing an appeal by the defendants, Marks and Spencer plc, that an industrial tribunal had erred in law in concluding, in hearings spread over seven days between April 22, 1994 and April 6,

1995, that they had committed an act of discrimination against her.

Mr Ian Macdonald, QC and Mr Bernard Wilshire for Ms Martins; Mr Eshed Tabachnik, QC and Mr Clive Sheldon for Marks and Spencer.

LORD JUSTICE MUMMERY, giving the judgment of the court, said the reasons do not include any specific reference to the Act or its terms.

The court regretted to say that those strictures were justified. Their Lordships were all aware, as former judges of the Employment Appeal Tribunal, of the difficulties faced by industrial tribunals in lengthy, contested race discrimination cases.

The industrial tribunals had an enormous, ever-increasing case load. If a case overran the estimated length and could not be finished within the time originally allotted to it, there were unavoidable problems in fixing the dates of the adjourned hearing to suit all three members of the tribunal, as well as the parties, their representatives and witnesses.

After reviewing the submissions and evidence the court decided to dismiss Ms Martins' complaint without further reference to an industrial tribunal.

Finally, the court wished to add a few words of support to regional chairmen and chairwomen of industrial tribunals in handling cases of race discrimination and victimisation.

Their view coincided with that of the Employment Appeal Tribunal in two recent judgments given by the President, Mr Justice Morritt. They referred to *Elke v Commissioners of Customs and Excise* (November 21, 1997) and *Eurobell (Holdings) plc v Barker* (The Times November 12, 1997).

passages and non-sequiturs hinder comprehension.

The appeal tribunal commented that, in addition, there had been "the failure to make findings specific to the relevant provisions of the Race Relations Act 1976, indeed the reasons do not include any specific reference to the Act or its terms".

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In both cases the EAT made the point that good judicial case management of proceedings by an industrial tribunal was critical to a fair, orderly, just and efficient hearing.

Their Lordships appreciated that that was easier said than done in situations where there were pressing demands on the time of the chairmen for full hearings, where neither party was inclined to be cooperative and where more and more parties were unrepresented and inexperienced in preparing a case for hearing.

In most cases of race discrimination it would be good practice to hold a meeting for preliminary directions, so as to ensure, as far as possible, that the parties and the tribunal identify the issues before the hearing of the case began.

The chairman could then consider making directions, such as the issues falling for determination at the hearing and, if appropriate, the exchange of witness statements in advance of the hearing.

It would also be important to obtain from the parties at that stage a reliable estimate of the length of the hearing. The parties should be asked to justify that estimate by reference to the number of documents which the tribunal was likely to be asked to examine and the number of witnesses likely to be called to give evidence on the relevant issues.

If that course was taken, it should be possible for the regional office to allot a realistic slot in the list to ensure an uninterrupted hearing of the whole case without damaging disruptions which had occurred in the present and other cases.

Solicitors: Bindman & Partners; Mr E. J. Kieran.

Summing up may clarify questions from jury

Regina v Falls. In his discretion, a judge ought consider it appropriate to deal with a question from a jury before summing up a case but he was not obliged to do so if he thought his summing up was likely to clarify any questions.

The Courts-Martial Appeals Court (Lord Justice Hutchison, Mr Justice Laws and Mr Justice Curran) so said in December 12, 1997, in dismissing the appeal of Raymond Carberry Falls, who was found guilty on January 17, 1996 at a general court-martial held at Preston, before Assistant Judge

Advocate General Hunter and the court, of possession of a class A drug (cannabis) with intent to supply.

LORD JUSTICE HUTCHISON said that it had been submitted that the Judge Advocate had erred in refusing before summing up to inquire into the nature of questions he had been informed the court wished to raise.

Reliance had been placed on *Berry v The Queen* [1992] 2 AC 364, 383 where Lord Lowry had said in the course of his speech: "The jury are entitled at any stage to the judge's help."

However, there was a fundamental difference between a jury wishing to receive further assistance after a summing up and one wishing to ask a question beforehand.

Of course a judge might exercise his discretion to deal with a question even before summing up, but he was under no obligation to do so if he thought his summing up would clarify matters.

Since no questions were asked afterwards it was apparent that any problems the court might have had were answered in the summing up.

Burton v Camden London Borough Council. A deed of release of a joint tenancy to a fellow joint tenant had no effect between the signer of the deed and the landlord unless, in the context of a periodic tenancy, the tenancy was renewed by the landlord during the period when the tenancy, by virtue of the deed, was vested in the other joint tenant.

The Court of Appeal (Lord Justice Butler-Sloss and Sir John Vinelott) so held on December 17 in allowing an appeal by Susan Patricia Burton from the dismissal by Mr Recorder Keane at Central London County Court of her application that she was the sole tenant of Camden London Borough Council by virtue of a deed of release signed by her joint tenant

Deed of release of tenancy had no effect

in relation to a weekly tenancy.

SIR JOHN VINELOTT said that where a tenancy of a term of years was vested in joint tenants the surrender of the rights of one joint tenant in favour of the other joint tenant, by a deed, had no effect between the signer of the deed and the landlord unless, in the context of a periodic tenancy, the tenancy was renewed by the landlord during the period when the tenancy, by virtue of the deed, was vested in the other joint tenant.

The Court of Appeal (Lord Justice Butler-Sloss and Sir John Vinelott) so held on December 17 in allowing an appeal by Susan Patricia Burton from the dismissal by Mr Recorder Keane at Central London County Court of her application that she was the sole tenant of Camden London Borough Council by virtue of a deed of release signed by her joint tenant

Council under no duty to act humanely

Regina v Brighton and Hove Council, Ex parte Marmont. Where a local authority was evicting travellers through proceedings under Order 113 of the Rules of the Supreme Court for repossession of its own land, it was not under an obligation to take account of Gypsy Sites Policy and Unauthorised Camping (Department of the Environment Circular 18/94) on behaving humanely.

Mr Justice Tucker so held in the Queen's Bench Division on January 12 when refusing the application of Samantha Marmont and Sarah Dymond for certiorari to quash the decision of Brighton and Hove Council of June 3, 1997 to repossess council property occupied by them and other travellers.

HIS LORDSHIP said that the applicants contended that the

council had not applied DoE Circular 18/94. The circular made it plain that local authorities should use their powers in a humane and compassionate fashion.

The council contended that the circular offered guidance on gypsy sites under sections 77 to 80 of the Criminal Justice and Public Order Act 1994 and not where a council had commenced repossession proceedings in respect of its own land in Order 113 summary proceedings for possession.

In his Lordship's view, there was no good authority for the proposition that a local authority was obliged to take into account the guidance contained in the circular before seeking to recover possession of its own land under Order 113.

Share gains halved

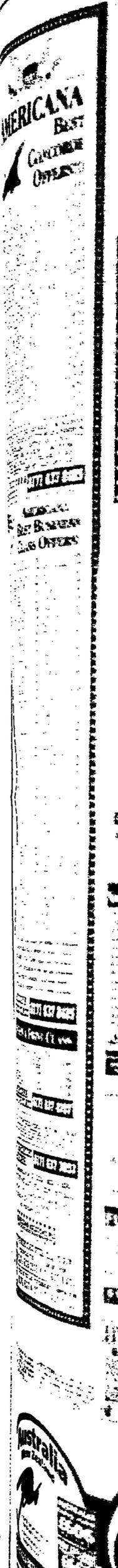
TRADING PERIOD: Settlement takes place five business days after the day of trade. Changes are calculated on the previous day's close, but adjustments are made when a stock is ex-dividend. Changes, yields and price/earnings ratios are based on middle prices.

1997/98	High	Low	Company	Price	Change	%	Yield	P/E
ALCOHOLIC BEVERAGES								
Asahi	141	138	Asahi	138.5	-2.5	-1.8	3.2	14.1
Beck's	112	110	Beck's	110.5	-1.5	-1.4	3.5	11.2
Carlsberg	112	110	Carlsberg	110.5	-1.5	-1.4	3.5	11.2
Heineken	112	110	Heineken	110.5	-1.5	-1.4	3.5	11.2
King	112	110	King	110.5	-1.5	-1.4	3.5	11.2
Miller	112	110	Miller	110.5	-1.5	-1.4	3.5	11.2
Orkla	112	110	Orkla	110.5	-1.5	-1.4	3.5	11.2
Sankey	112	110	Sankey	110.5	-1.5	-1.4	3.5	11.2
Stout	112	110	Stout	110.5	-1.5	-1.4	3.5	11.2
Watson	112	110	Watson	110.5	-1.5	-1.4	3.5	11.2
Yokohama	112	110	Yokohama	110.5	-1.5	-1.4	3.5	11.2
BANKS								
Barclays	112	110	Barclays	110.5	-1.5	-1.4	3.5	11.2
HSBC	112	110	HSBC	110.5	-1.5	-1.4	3.5	11.2
London	112	110	London	110.5	-1.5	-1.4	3.5	11.2
NatWest	112	110	NatWest	110.5	-1.5	-1.4	3.5	11.2
Paragon	112	110	Paragon	110.5	-1.5	-1.4	3.5	11.2
Prudential	112	110	Prudential	110.5	-1.5	-1.4	3.5	11.2
Reliance	112	110	Reliance	110.5	-1.5	-1.4	3.5	11.2
Standard	112	110	Standard	110.5	-1.5	-1.4	3.5	11.2
TSB	112	110	TSB	110.5	-1.5	-1.4	3.5	11.2
Windsor	112	110	Windsor	110.5	-1.5	-1.4	3.5	11.2
BREWERIES, PUBS & REST								
Asahi	141	138	Asahi	138.5	-2.5	-1.8	3.2	14.1
Beck's	112	110	Beck's	110.5	-1.5	-1.4	3.5	11.2
Carlsberg	112	110	Carlsberg	110.5	-1.5	-1.4	3.5	11.2
Heineken	112	110	Heineken	110.5	-1.5	-1.4	3.5	11.2
King	112	110	King	110.5	-1.5	-1.4	3.5	11.2
Miller	112	110	Miller	110.5	-1.5	-1.4	3.5	11.2
Orkla	112	110	Orkla	110.5	-1.5	-1.4	3.5	11.2
Sankey	112	110	Sankey	110.5	-1.5	-1.4	3.5	11.2
Stout	112	110	Stout	110.5	-1.5	-1.4	3.5	11.2
Watson	112	110	Watson	110.5	-1.5	-1.4	3.5	11.2
Yokohama	112	110	Yokohama	110.5	-1.5	-1.4	3.5	11.2
DIVERSIFIED INDUSTRIALS								
Asahi	141	138	Asahi	138.5	-2.5	-1.8	3.2	14.1
Beck's	112	110	Beck's	110.5	-1.5	-1.4	3.5	11.2
Carlsberg	112	110	Carlsberg	110.5	-1.5	-1.4	3.5	11.2
Heineken	112	110	Heineken	110.5	-1.5	-1.4	3.5	11.2
King	112	110	King	110.5	-1.5	-1.4	3.5	11.2
Miller	112	110	Miller	110.5	-1.5	-1.4	3.5	11.2
Orkla	112	110	Orkla	110.5	-1.5	-1.4	3.5	11.2
Sankey	112	110	Sankey	110.5	-1.5	-1.4	3.5	11.2
Stout	112	110	Stout	110.5	-1.5	-1.4	3.5	11.2
Watson	112	110	Watson	110.5	-1.5	-1.4	3.5	11.2
Yokohama	112	110	Yokohama	110.5	-1.5	-1.4	3.5	11.2
BUILDING & CONSTRUCT								
Asahi	141	138	Asahi	138.5	-2.5	-1.8	3.2	14.1
Beck's	112	110	Beck's	110.5	-1.5	-1.4	3.5	11.2
Carlsberg	112	110	Carlsberg	110.5	-1.5	-1.4	3.5	11.2
Heineken	112	110	Heineken	110.5	-1.5	-1.4	3.5	11.2
King	112	110	King	110.5	-1.5	-1.4	3.5	11.2
Miller	112	110	Miller	110.5	-1.5	-1.4	3.5	11.2
Orkla	112	110	Orkla	110.5	-1.5	-1.4	3.5	11.2
Sankey	112	110	Sankey	110.5	-1.5	-1.4	3.5	11.2
Stout	112	110	Stout	110.5	-1.5	-1.4	3.5	11.2
Watson	112	110	Watson	110.5	-1.5	-1.4	3.5	11.2
Yokohama	112	110	Yokohama	110.5	-1.5	-1.4	3.5	11.2
ELECTRICITY								
Asahi	141	138	Asahi	138.5	-2.5	-1.8	3.2	14.1
Beck's	112	110	Beck's	110.5	-1.5	-1.4	3.5	11.2
Carlsberg	112	110	Carlsberg	110.5	-1.5	-1.4	3.5	11.2
Heineken	112	110	Heineken	110.5	-1.5	-1.4	3.5	11.2
King	112	110	King	110.5	-1.5	-1.4	3.5	11.2
Miller	112	110	Miller	110.5	-1.5	-1.4	3.5	11.2
Orkla	112	110	Orkla	110.5	-1.5	-1.4	3.5	11.2
Sankey	112	110	Sankey	110.5	-1.5	-1.4	3.5	11.2
Stout	112	110	Stout	110.5	-1.5	-1.4	3.5	11.2
Watson	112	110	Watson	110.5	-1.5	-1.4	3.5	11.2
Yokohama	112	110	Yokohama	110.5	-1.5	-1.4	3.5	11.2
ELECTRONIC & ELECT								
Asahi	141	138	Asahi	138.5	-2.5	-1.8	3.2	14.1
Beck's	112	110	Beck's	110.5	-1.5	-1.4	3.5	11.2
Carlsberg	112	110	Carlsberg	110.5	-1.5	-1.4	3.5	11.2
Heineken	112	110	Heineken	110.5	-1.5	-1.4	3.5	11.2
King	112	110	King	110.5	-1.5	-1.4	3.5	11.2
Miller	112	110	Miller	110.5	-1.5	-1.4	3.5	11.2
Orkla	112	110	Orkla	110.5	-1.5	-1.4	3.5	11.2
Sankey	112	110	Sankey	110.5	-1.5	-1.4	3.5	11.2
Stout	112	110	Stout	110.5	-1.5	-1.4	3.5	11.2
Watson	112	110	Watson	110.5	-1.5	-1.4	3.5	11.2
Yokohama	112	110	Yokohama	110.5	-1.5	-1.4	3.5	11.2
ENGINEERING								
Asahi	141	138	Asahi	138.5	-2.5	-1.8	3.2	14.1
Beck's	112	110	Beck's	110.5	-1.5	-1.4	3.5	11.2
Carlsberg	112	110	Carlsberg	110.5	-1.5	-1.4	3.5	11.2
Heineken	112	110	Heineken	110.5	-1.5	-1.4	3.5	11.2
King	112	110	King	110.5	-1.5	-1.4	3.5	11.2
Miller	112	110	Miller	110.5	-1.5	-1.4	3.5	11.2
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Watson	112	110	Watson	110.5	-1.5	-1.4	3.5	11.2
Yokohama	112	110	Yokohama	110.5	-1.5	-1.4	3.5	11.2
CHEMICALS								
Asahi	141	138	Asahi	138.5	-2.5	-1.8	3.2	14.1
Beck's	112	110	Beck's	110.5	-1.5	-1.4	3.5	11.2
Carlsberg	112	110	Carlsberg	110.5	-1.5	-1.4	3.5	11.2
Heineken	112	110	Heineken	110.5	-1.5	-1.4	3.5	11.2
King	112	110	King	110.5	-1.5	-1.4	3.5	11.2
Miller	112	110	Miller	110.5	-1.5	-1.4	3.5	11.2
Orkla	112	110	Orkla	110.5	-1.5	-1.4	3.5	11.2
Sankey	112	110	Sankey	110.5	-1.5	-1.4	3.5	11.2
Stout	112	110	Stout	110.5	-1.5	-1.4	3.5	11.2
Watson	112	110	Watson	110.5	-1.5	-1.4	3.5	11.2
Yokohama	112	110	Yokohama	110.5	-1.5	-1.4	3.5	11.2
DISTRIBUTORS								
Asahi	141	138	Asahi	138.5	-2.5	-1.8	3.2	14.1
Beck's	112	110	Beck's	110.5	-1.5	-1.4	3.5	11.2
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Sankey	112	110	Sankey	110.5	-1.5	-1.4	3.5	11.2
Stout	112	110	Stout	110.5	-1.5	-1.4	3.5	11.2
Watson	112	110	Watson	110.5	-1.5	-1.4	3.5	11.2
Yokohama	112	110	Yokohama	110.5	-1.5	-1.4	3.5	11.2

1997/98	High	Low	Company	Price	Change	%	Yield	P/E
ENGINEERING, VEHICLES								
Asahi	141	138	Asahi	138.5	-2.5	-1.8	3.2	14.1
Beck's	112	110	Beck's	110.5	-1.5	-1.4	3.5	11.2
Carlsberg	112	110	Carlsberg	110.5	-1.5	-1.4	3.5	11.2
Heineken	112	110	Heineken	110.5	-1.5	-1.4	3.5	11.2
King	112	110	King	110.5	-1.5	-1.4	3.5	11.2
Miller	112	110	Miller	110.5	-1.5	-1.4	3.5	11.2
Orkla	112	110	Orkla	110.5	-1.5	-1.4	3.5	11.2
Sankey	112	110	Sankey	110.5	-1.5	-1.4	3.5	11.2
Stout	112	110	Stout	110.5	-1.5	-1.4	3.5	11.2
Watson	112	110	Watson	110.5	-1.5	-1.4	3.5	11.2
Yokohama	112	110	Yokohama	110.5	-1.5	-1.4	3.5	11.2
FOOD MANUFACTURERS								
Asahi	141	138	Asahi	138.5	-2.5	-1.8	3.2	14.1
Beck's	112	110	Beck's	110.5	-1.5	-1.4	3.5	11.2
Carlsberg	112	110	Carlsberg	110.5	-1.5	-1.4	3.5	11.2
Heineken	112	110	Heineken	110.5	-1.5	-1.4	3.5	11.2
King	112	110	King	110.5	-1.5	-1.4	3.5	11.2
Miller	112	110	Miller	110.5	-1.5	-1.4	3.5	11.2
Orkla	112	110	Orkla	110.5	-1.5	-1.4	3.5	11.2
Sankey	112	110	Sankey	110.5	-1.5	-1.4	3.5	11.2
Stout	112	110	Stout	110.5	-1.5	-1.4	3.5	11.2
Watson	112	110	Watson	110.5	-1.5			

Main table containing unit trust prices, organized by fund name and category. Includes columns for fund name, price, and other financial metrics.

THE PEP DISCOUNT DIRECTORY. SAVE up to 5% on a PEP. This 27 page A4 guide is ESSENTIAL reading for all PEP investors. Includes contact information for HARGREAVES LANGSHAW ASSET MANAGEMENT LTD.



Handwritten text at the bottom left of the page, possibly a signature or note.

Confessions of a skinflick impresario

NEW MOVIES: Geoff Brown finds much to admire in *Boogie Nights*, a sardonic view of the porn industry

Reader, I used to watch sex films. It was my job, you understand. Twenty years ago I would sit in some Soho dive, surrounded by men in dirty mags, pad and pen held gingerly on my lap, ready to note down any subtleties for the review I would write for the *British Film Institute's Monthly Film Bulletin*. A detailed synopsis was also required, though since the characters' chief activities were taking numerous showers and getting between the sheets, the plots were largely a matter for my imagination.

This was useful training for a film critic, useful, too, as background experience when something like *Boogie Nights* roars into view, years in the future. Here is a pulsating epic from a young, ambitious American, Paul Thomas Anderson, which takes a wild ride through the adult entertainment industry in Los Angeles in the 1970s and 1980s.

Our focal point is the film-making activities of Jack Horner, a director who vaguely dreams of making something "true and right and dramatic" while serving up the necessary acres of flesh. His technicians and actors form a family, a dysfunctional one, and the film's journey begins when this surrogate father, superbly played by Burt Reynolds, finds a new

- Boogie Nights**
Warner West End, 18, 154 mins
Dynamic epic about the porn movie industry
- The Devil's Advocate**
Warner West End, 18, 144 mins
Al Pacino acts like the devil
- Pretty Village, Pretty Flame**
ICA Cinema, 18, 115 mins
Forceful drama about the Bosnian civil war
- Battleship Potemkin**
Curzon Phoenix, 72 mins
Eisenstein's classic
- Devil's Island**
Metro, 15, 103 mins
A disappointment from Iceland
- Bring Me the Head of Mavis Davis**
Warner West End, 15, 100 mins
Comedy flop with Rik Mayall

son: a busboy, well-endowed in the trouser area, who soars to porn stardom under the name Dirk Diggler.

The Diggler character, played by Mark Wahlberg, is based to some degree upon

John C. Holmes, a hardcore personality, similarly well-endowed, who never came my way. As the movie's clock advances from 1971 to 1984, Wahlberg's star rises and falls. Drugs and arrogance get the better of him. He becomes a hustler, a drug dealer and thief. Other members of Horner's entourage swamp themselves with cocaine, splatter the walls with a crime of passion, and land in jail for underage sex. Video, meanwhile, starts to undercut Horner's market. Can there be a happy ending for anyone?

One of Anderson's many achievements is to make you want late to be kind. Still a child when the porn business boomed, Anderson treats his subject with unforced affection, mixed with parody and sardonic humour. He never strives for titillation, or moral superiority, but presents Horner's band as vulnerable souls, trying to make the best of what they have.

All the cast give well-judged performances, though you notice above all Julianne Moore as Horner's troubled female star Amber Waves, William H. Macy as the factotum who tries to keep everyone in touch with reality only to lose his own grip, and Reynolds, benign and expansive as the Diaghilev of porn.

Anderson pitches along his busy script with brio, not for nothing does he list *GoodFellas* and Altman's *Nashville* among the film's influences. Disco music from the period keeps the soundtrack bouncing. His one previous feature, *Hard Eight*, showed some individuality, but nothing like the same verve: *Boogie Nights* has so much energy you feel it might explode.

And in a way it does. Or at least it fragments. Once Wahlberg's character falls apart, Anderson's touch becomes more ponderous. Scenes get over-extended, invested with apprehensions of doom. But a top-heavy finale is a small price to pay for a film with ambition, intelligence and genuine feeling for the strange underworld it inhabits. If only those miserable movies of 20 years ago had a fraction of this power.



Burt Reynolds, benign and expansive as the blue-movie director Jack Horner in Paul Thomas Anderson's wildly pulsating epic, *Boogie Nights*

Most of the power of *The Devil's Advocate* is invested in Al Pacino. He does not use it particularly wisely, though it is hard to beat his performance as a carnival attraction. Pacino plays the head of a glitzy law firm in New York. He shares his name, John Milton, with the author of *Paradise Lost*. But his real name is the Devil. He can make a church font boil over just by inserting a fingertip. He radiates sexual power. He can talk all languages, pull many faces, laugh like a horse, sing like Frank Sinatra, and bend all people round his finger, particularly Keanu Reeves, the charismatic young lawyer he entices with offers of wealth and glory.

A Faust story, then. But director Taylor Hackford and his crew are too busy gorging on the preposterous nature of their material to take hellfire seriously. Eternal damnation never seems the issue when

there are so many sideshows to watch. Apart from Pacino rampaging, we can wallow in Charlize Theron. Reeves's wife, who gradually goes bonkers in their Fifth Avenue apartment while Reeves is kept busy defending an indefensible case of multiple homicide. There is Connie Neilsen, a striking new comer, as the redheaded colleague who becomes Reeves's other obsession. And do not forget the marble frieze in Pacino's apartment, which leaps into provocative life for the finale.

As the devil's advocate, Reeves keeps his head well when so many are losing theirs. But the odds are stacked against him. Decked with ritz settings, fancy time-lapse photography, and satanic special effects, this is a movie that zaps the eyeballs as it fries the brain.

From the gargoyles cinema of *The Devil's Advocate*, appalling and fun at the same

time, we move on to more thoughtful attractions. *Pretty Village*, Pretty Flame plunges us into the cruelty and absurdity of the Bosnian civil war. (It is reviewed in detail opposite by Anthony Loyd, who covered Bosnia for *The Times*.) The director, Srđan Dragojević, was born in Belgrade in 1963. Some of the film's craziness may recall Kusturica's *Underground*; but Dragojević's depiction of a country in chaos indulges in fewer Fellini-esque antics.

For much of the time we are underground ourselves, in a tunnel. A Serbian unit shelter inside; a Muslim band fire from above. The opposing sides contain two former friends, met as children during the early scenes (Dragojević darts from year to year, as he darts between moods, with impressive ease). Political stands are not taken: *Pretty Village* shakes its head at civil war with sorrow,

anger, and fits of mad laughter.

Compared to Dragojević's jolting film, Eisenstein's *Battleship Potemkin* of 1925, revived in the context of the National Film Theatre's Eisenstein retrospective, appears a work of fierce discipline. Rifles were the main weapon in the mutiny on board the *Potemkin* in 1905. The director's own weapons were the ground-breaking, rhythmic editing and montage effects, one brilliant cameraman, Edouard Tissé and a revolutionary "levitour" that now seems beyond any artist's grasp. If you have only read about the film in a book, take this chance and watch it leap to life on the cinema screen. You may feel resistant to caring about the maggotty meat fed to Russian sailors more than 90 years ago. It is far harder, though, to take on board the problems of the characters in *Devil's Island*.

Harder still to cuddle up to *Bring Me the Head of Mavis Davis*, a British comedy about the bungled attempts of a record producer to increase public interest and boost album sales by bumping off his troublesome, ageing star. Actors with more personal charm than Rik Mayall and Jane Horrocks would help; so would a script with genuine jokes. John Henderson, late of *Loch Ness*, directed.

'A work of art'

Every week young film fans discuss the latest releases...

- BOOGIE NIGHTS**
Damian Samuels, 20: Julianne Moore gives the performance of her career. Laura Brook, 19: Absolutely superb. A film of epic proportions! Leslie Isaiah Thomas, 20: Both hilarious and hilarious. As good as *Pulp Fiction*. Emma Rolph, 19: A total work of art - Marley Mark is astonishing.
- DEVIL'S ADVOCATE**
Damian: *The Firm* meets *The Witches of Eastwick*. Enormous fun. Laura: An enjoyable piece of nonsense. Pacino and Reeves are both great. Leslie: Pacino's portrayal of



the devil is magnificently over the top. Emma: Keanu delivers an unexpectedly good performance. Who'd have thought the boy could act?

BRING ME THE HEAD OF MAVIS DAVIS
Damian: Very disappointing. Only Rik Mayall's clowning provides the old giggle. Laura: The actors do their very best with a script that should never have been given the thumbs up. Emma: The talent of Jane Horrocks is absolutely wasted in this humour-free movie. Leslie: Embarrassing.

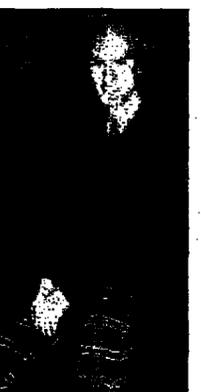
Driven by Gaels

POP: Glasgow's annual jamboree of Celtic music speaks a common language in many tongues

trade and emigration and we talk the same musical language.

When he played in Ireland, Nunez found that he could join the most impromptu pub session and he instantly knew all the tunes - even if they had different titles. "The Galician people are very proud to call themselves Celts. There is a Galician rhythm called the alborada and it is the same as a Scottish jig."

Nunez has practically been adopted by the Chieftains as an additional member, touring with them extensively and playing on their albums. In return, the group appeared on Nunez's album *Brotherhood of the Stars*.



Carlos Nunez Spanish bagpipes, anyone?

He says the pipes started out the same throughout the Celtic world, but have developed a distinctive character in their different environments. "The Scottish pipes are fire, the Galician pipes are earth and the Irish pipes are water. We play with a slightly happier feel than the melancholic Irish sound, because we have a little Latin influence as well."

On the other side of the Atlantic, the Celtic tradition has been similarly preserved in remarkably pure form. Natalie MacMaster, the brilliant and agile 24-year-old Canadian fiddler from Nova Scotia, says: "There are more fiddlers per capita where I come from on Cape Breton than anywhere else in the world. Traditional music is still a way of life. Our Irish and Scottish roots have remained strong because the islands are isolated. I remember my grandmother singing to me in Gaelic."

She has had no formal training, but began playing at the age of nine. She learnt the Scottish tune *Glen Coe March* on her first day and gave her first public concert three months after picking up the instrument.

Her albums are full of Scottish and Irish jigs and reels played in the unique Cape Breton style, rhythmic and passionate yet with a light and delicate touch. Even *The Scotsman* newspaper was forced to admit that she plays a strathspey the slowest, most difficult of Scottish airs in "a more fluent way" than any contemporary Scot.

She accepts the compliment with a becoming modesty. "It is a thrill to play at Celtic Connections because this is where our heritage came from. It is like returning something which was borrowed."

NIGEL WILLIAMSON
Celtic Connections is at the Glasgow Royal Concert Hall (0141-353413) until Feb 1

Off the page, on the stage

Asian Dub Foundation, announces Dr Das of the er, Asian Dub Foundation. Stylistically, this London-based collective are the wild card of the tour, but their fusion of hip-hop, bhangra, drum and bass and of course dub reggae is a potent mix.

Yet however much this compromises its street cred, we should still raise a glass to the *NME* for its commitment to breaking new acts. By allowing us to see the young pretenders to the throne in the flesh, rather than just in print, the magazine faithfully walks it like it talks it.

This year's brood is a marked improvement on 1997's line-up. First up were Theaudience, who insist on spelling their name as one word. No complaints about the music though. Gorgeous, fluttering pop melodies and the sweetest vocals of Sophie Ellis-Bextor make this band irresistible.

Impossibly youthful and with a slinky, graceful air, Ellis-Bextor's face is surely destined for the bedroom walls of many a student bedsit. She exudes the studied cool of a Debbie Harry, and indeed Blondie provide the most obvious musical reference point. The sparkling guitars and lush synth backdrops of the forthcoming single, *If You Can't Do It When You're Young, When Can You Do It*, will never go out of fashion.

But if Theaudience should consider changing their name to, say, Brunema, Bath's warms jets should probably alter their moniker to damp squibs. A trad rock band with an undeniable fondness for the wanton white noise attack of the Fluxus, they throw all the right shapes and make all the right noises. There's only one thing missing: the merest hint of a memorable song. "Good evening, we're the

Welsh power trio Stereophonics proved to be a good choice as the headline act. Constant touring has added a whole new dimension to their sound. Last year's debut album, *Word Gets Around*, was a competent, occasionally inspired post-Britpop record with singer Kelly Jones wrapping a Liam Gallagher-type scenario around socially aware lyrics. But live, songs like *A Thousand Trees* become full bodied, larger than life anthems, and there's an irrefragable energy to it all.

NICK KELLY

"GORGEOUS TO LOOK AT, ...SEXY, INTELLIGENT... UTTERLY ABSORBING."
— *Movie Guide*

"A GLORIOUS FILM. HELENA BONHAM CARTER DESERVES TO WIN AN OSCAR. PLEASE DON'T MISS IT."
— *The Daily Mail*

"A SENSUAL TALE OF INTRIGUE AND BETRAYAL ... TERRIFIC PERFORMANCES... DON'T MISS IT."
— *The Independent on Sunday*

"THE YEAR'S MOST POWERFUL PULSE OF GROWTH-UP SEX ON CELLULOID."
— *The Guardian*

HELENA BONHAM CARTER LINUS ROACHE ALISON ELLIOTT
THE WINGS OF THE DOVE

NOW SHOWING

STARTS TOMORROW

"GOODFELLAS' MEETS 'PULP FICTION'"
— *TIME*

"INCANDESCENT... A CINEMATIC TOUR DE FORCE"
— *Rolling Stone*

"ALREADY A CONTENDER FOR FILM OF THE YEAR"
— *Entertainment Weekly*

MARK WAHLBERG JULIANNE MOORE BURT REYNOLDS
DON CHADLER JOHN C. REILLY WILLIAM H. MACY HEATHER GRAHAM

BOOGIE NIGHTS

AT CINEMAS NATIONWIDE TOMORROW

حکمان الأول

Anthony Loyd is returned to Bosnia by the brutal *Pretty Village, Pretty Flame*

Welcome to the real war

Blown through with atrocity, folly, fanaticism and disillusion, *Pretty Village, Pretty Flame* exposes the Serb psyche in the Bosnian war as never before. A work of potential genius flawed only by the contentiousness of its politics, the film deserves a cult status among war epics, a position that it is unlikely to gain from British audiences more easily satisfied with the simplistic, tepid storyline of *Welcome to Sarajevo*. (More than 200 Bosnians walked out during the latter's screening at the Sarajevo Film Festival.)

Dedicated to the film industry of a country that no longer exists, that of Yugoslavia, and directed by Srđjan Dragojević, the suspense unravels through a series of flashbacks as Milan, a severely wounded Bosnian Serb soldier, lies in a Belgrade hospital with the survivors of his platoon.

His tortured recollections sift through memories of a childhood in eastern Bosnia, focusing on his relationship with his best friend, Halil, a Muslim, and the events that brought the two into brutal conflict.

A tunnel is used as a metaphor for the conflict's roots. Inaugurated as the Tunnel of Brotherhood and Unity in 1971, it soon fell into decay and disuse as Tito's Yugoslavia slipped into economic disrepair, and is the subject of fearful fantasies for Milan and Halil—who, when children, refuse to enter it, convinced that an ogre lives inside its shadowy depths.

With the arrival of war, so Milan becomes a fighter for the Serbs, more through weary resignation than idealism. Together with his platoon he burns his way through the Muslim villages of eastern Bosnia, the soldiers making some fairly trite observations about the philosophy of their work. "They say war brings out the best and worst in man; what is the best?" one notes dryly.

Caught by a sudden Muslim advance, most of the platoon is killed. But Milan and six survivors escape through the forest to the tunnel of his childhood, pursued by their Muslim adversaries, led by Halil.

Among the handful of Serb soldiers with Milan are a professor, a smalltime crook, the heroin-addict son of an army officer who is trying to break his habit through "war



Telling it like it was: a scene from Srđjan Dragojević's film of a country torn apart, *Pretty Village, Pretty Flame*

therapy", two simple brothers-in-law who swallowed Serb propaganda without ever knowing what a Muslim was, and the "Captain", their commander. There is no better cross-section of the fighters who really did the killing and dying in Bosnia's hills.

Trapped with them is one foreigner, Lisa Kinel, an American journalist, a figure who parodies the Serb vision of the Western media. Her presence allows for some of the film's blacker-edged dialogue. "Let's slaughter her, she'll say we did anyway," remarks Velja the thief in Serbian shortly after her arrival. "What did he say?" she asks Speedy the junkie. "Oh, he says that you look a lot like Sharon Tate," Speedy retorts.

More than any other it is she who is forced to redefine her interpretations of the war. As the Serb fighters are gradually killed off, the survivors have to face the ghastly vision of their former school mistress, strapped with explosives to become a human bomb, forced down the tunnel towards them. It is Kinel who shouts "shoot the bitch" louder than the soldiers.

They drink their own urine to survive, listen to the tortured cries of a Serb prisoner being castrated, shoot themselves and their own, joke with their enemy and cradle their dead. It may all seem overstretched to anyone ignorant of Bosnia; to those who were there, it is understated.

For a time it is the words of the Serb "Captain", a former sergeant in the Yugoslav People's Army, that hold sway in

the tunnel. A man who admits to having walked 350km with a portrait of Tito around his neck on the death of the Marshal 13 years before, he talks the official line of the doomed Yugoslav cause. Eventually, though, the words of Velja the crook usurp his credibility and reveal the war for what it is. "As long as Tito shoved American dollars up your arse you were happy to blather about brotherhood and unity," Velja says. "Do you think one of their houses we burnt, or one of ours they burnt was burnt honestly?"

This, however, is as much culpability of the Serb strategy as can be found in the film. Halil the Muslim is transformed from an affable car mechanic into the demonic commander of a group who

kills Milan's mother, castrates a prisoner, and blows up the body of the school mistress with scarcely a second thought. For their part, the Serbs do little more than burn a lot of houses and kill a few Muslim soldiers in action. Perhaps a more accurate balance of guilt is too much to hope for from a Yugoslav film so soon after the Bosnian war has finished.

If you are interested in Bosnia, nationalism or the nature of war, see *Pretty Village, Pretty Flame* (for details see box, facing page). If not, wait until *Welcome to Sarajevo* comes out on video: you may be disappointed, but perhaps you never wanted anything more.

Anthony Loyd reported on the conflict in Bosnia for The Times

The majority verdict? A classic

NEW ON VIDEO
12 ANGRY MEN
MGM, U, 1957
THE components are 11 character actors, one big star (Henry Fonda), a single jury room set, a great cameraman (Boris Kaufman) and a television play by Reginald Rose stamped with worthy intentions. From these elements debuting director Sidney Lumet, himself from TV, shapes clever, engrossing, high-tension cinema, atmospherically photographed in black-and-white. Fonda plays the lone juror trying to convince his colleagues to reconsider their hasty verdict about a boy on trial for murder.



Henry Fonda (centre) holds out for American justice against six of the 12 Angry Men

A GENERATION
Eureka, 12, 1954
POSTWAR Polish cinema put itself on the map with this forceful drama from Andrzej Wajda about a maverick lad (Tadeusz Lomnicki) doing his bit in the Warsaw ghetto uprising: the first film in his trilogy about the Resistance. Abundant location shooting and crisp black-and-white photography keep the film fresh. You can see a great director emerging from his chrysalis, moving away from the romantic realism of Polish national cinema towards a jagged and more personal style.

ONE PLUS ONE
Cannes, 15, 1968
ONE moment the Rolling Stones are rehearsing their album *Beggars Banquet* in the recording studio engrossing footage; this: The next we are with Black Power militants in a junkyard in the Thames, or hearing *Mein Kampf* read in a bookshop, or watching a lady called Eve Democracy beauti-

fying London with scrawled slogans. Don't expect the fragments to cohere, for this is a film by Jean-Luc Godard, shot in London during the summer of 1968, when the world was shaking with revolutionary fervour. For Godard the film signposted his path away from the New Wave mainstream towards no-budget, collective film-making. For us, now, it

eloquently captures a place, a time and a moment in history.
THE PLEASURE GARDEN
Academy, U, 1952
AH, THE wonders of video! After years of squinting, largely unseen, on archive shelves, this enticing British curiosity leaps into public view. Californian poet and free spirit

James Broughton made the film during a spell in England, using BFI funds, the ruined delights of the Crystal Palace gardens, and a crazy cast including Hattie Jacques, Jill Bennett, Lindsay Anderson and John Le Mesurier. To prancing Francophile music by Stanley Bate, the cast enact a whimsical fable about the war between repression and free expression. Even at 26 minutes the *jeu d'esprit* is a mite overlong, but its charm and wit are perfectly genuine, and where else can you find encapsulated in images the London Bohemia of the early 1950s?

ROSEANNA'S GRAVE
PolyGram, 12, 1997
MUCH ado about nothing, perhaps, although there is something beguiling about this romantic comedy with a fairytale streak, set in Italy. Marcello (Jean Reno) needs to keep his fellow villagers alive to save the one remaining cemetery plot available to house his wife (Mercedes Ruchel), cursed with a heart condition. The players may be the wrong nationality, but their characters are well-observed and they work hard to entertain us. And the photography is pleasurable, alert both to golden sunshine and earthy shadows. Paul Weiland directs. A rental release.

Geoff Brown

all men are bad and in their badness reign.
william shakespeare

jan 30

Gold flute swapped for baton

CONCERT
Polish CO Galway
Manchester

Although it is clearly not Galway's cramped conducting style that has achieved this happy situation, it is no less clear that rehearsal for the tour was not only thorough but also highly effective. The orchestra will have got used to the anomalies in the baton technique — accepting, for example, that in some

circumstances an upbeat is actually to be read as a downbeat — while absorbing those qualities, like rhythmic precision and a finely drawn line, that are essential to the Galway musical personality.
He seemed to be relying on the string players to get him through the first movement of the first piece, the *Boisterous Bourrée* in the *Simple Symphony*, but after that he was more positive about his role, not least in securing a clear start to the *Playful Pizzicato* and keeping it impeccably together. The Dvořák Serenade was unfailingly attractive.
As for the Mozart Flute and Harp Concerto, if the ten performances on this tour enable Robles and Galway to set a record, it will certainly be some kind of an achievement, however unenviable. While it is true that it makes a useful pairing with the same composer's Flute Concerto in D on the other side of the interval, it is a weak centrepiece even in a programme of such slender means as this one.

Gerald Lerner

"SHOCKINGLY ENTERTAINING!"

— Michael Wilmington, CHICAGO TRIBUNE

"Perfectly evil"

— Stephen Hunter, WASHINGTON POST

"Vastly enjoyable romp through hell and damnation... Top Stuff"

— ESQUIRE

KEANU REEVES AL PACINO

DEVIL'S ADVOCATE

EVIL HAS ITS WINNING WAYS

Read the Harvard Business Review article on the film at www.wjw.com/devils

OPENS TOMORROW AT CINEMAS ACROSS THE COUNTRY

Master of the hidden meaning

The National Gallery has assembled a fine display of work by Van Eyck. Isabel Carlisle reports

In the galleries of the West, there are only around 20 paintings securely attributed to Jan van Eyck, and never more than three in any one place. Almost all are on panel and too fragile to be allowed to travel, so the National Gallery's newly opened exhibition of seven works is exceptional — even more so as it appears there has never been a show devoted exclusively to the 15th-century master before. Loans from Turin, Washington, Philadelphia and Antwerp have joined the three paintings in the National Gallery itself, allowing the full range of Van Eyck — religious and secular, interior and landscape — to be seen, and marvelled at, in one small room.

The *Arnolfini Portrait* is one of the best known paintings in the National Gallery. It is also one of the most teasing, because although Van Eyck appears to create a narrative out of the details of the furnishings in the room, the gestures of the couple who stand there hand in hand, and the tiny figures standing in the doorway behind us who are reflected in a round mirror, there is no real certainty as to what is going on. Is the woman pregnant? Are the couple being married or betrothed? Why is there a single lit candle in the chandelier?

For decades art historians have tried to use the key of iconography, the interpretation of symbols, to try to unlock the painting's meaning. But while iconography laid down the rules for religious painting in the early 15th century (and can be clearly seen in *The Annunciation* loaned from Washington), it is a relief that this exhibition accepts that it is not appropriate in every case.

Instead of bullying the painting into yielding up layers of meaning, *The Arnolfini Portrait* can be enjoyed as an invention of Van Eyck's, albeit showing real people in a real space. The colours and objects, such as the long curly hair of the little dog, were evidently chosen by Van Eyck out of a delight in paint and its ability to convey light and shadow and therefore form, and a delight in his own bravura technique.

This exhibition started its life as a scholarly comparison of two versions of the self-same theme of St Francis, both possibly although not certainly by Van Eyck. One is in the Philadelphia Museum of Art, the other in the Galleria Sabauda in Turin. Both have recently been cleaned and examined and, on the steps in Turin and Philadelphia, the purpose of this little show is to hang them with other paintings and manuscripts by Van Eyck in order to come closer to solving the problem of who really did paint them. They are shown side by side in London too, but the works around them make this more of a celebration of Van Eyck's art than



Virtually the inventor of atmospheric landscapes in northern art, Van Eyck produced one of his strangest and most beautiful in *Saint Barbara* (left), while obeying the rules of iconography in *The Annunciation*

an art history conundrum. The St Francis scene is set in a rocky landscape with a distant view of a river flowing past the walls of a town. It has the qualities that Van Eyck excelled at: the evocation of tremendous space, the meticulous drawing of details such as the fissures in the rocks, even

in the Philadelphia version the jewel-like intensity of colour in the oil-rich paint. While a little crucifix with six rainbow coloured wings hovers above the sleeping Brother Leo, bestowing the wounds of Christ (the stigmata — the highest accolade of sanctity) on St Francis, the saint stares past it, unsee-

ing. Even if an awkwardness in the limbs and a frieze-like rigidity in the two figures makes this less good than the best Van Eycks, there is still Van Eyck's extreme mixture of photographic clarity and imaginary world, the untroubled fusion of reality and unreality which his contempo-

raries would not have found at all strange. Van Eyck not only excelled in creating deceptively real interior and exterior spaces, he was one of the very first northern artists to do so. It is clear he delighted in pushing back the boundaries of what was possible in art. In the

Saint Barbara from Antwerp, he sticks to the rules of religious iconography by showing the saint with the tower that she was locked up in, but it is no mere toy-sized symbol. It is a huge and elaborate Gothic cathedral tower under construction in the middle distance of the

painting, with masons cutting stones and hoists hauling blocks to the top. This pallid brush-drawing in sepia on a white chalk ground on a lightly-coloured, pale blue sky is most unusual in being neither on paper nor a finished painting. It is the sort of surprise that Van Eyck could

be expected to produce. Credited as he is with the invention of atmospheric landscapes in northern art, it seems entirely appropriate that this should be one of the strangest and most beautiful.
● Recognising Van Eyck is in Room One of the National Gallery (0171-839 3321) until March 15

Out of control

WHATEVER one feels about Phyllis Nagy's plays — and (let's face it) her latest is one of her more resistible — they are never less than bold and seldom less than brazenly, headily original. Nagy is an American who lives in Britain; and I don't think there is a dramatist on either side of the Atlantic who has come closer to creating an alarming close-of-millennium atmosphere. That end-of-rush feel is missing from *Never Land*, though probably more because it is an intimate piece than because Nagy has gone soft. The tone is set in a first scene that opens at Sam with a naked girl babbling stream-of-consciousness prayers and listening to Purcell while she lies in a tin bath. On comes her anguished father in a suit, followed by her mother, who is looking for strong drink. What's going on in Steven Pimlott's production?

At base, a simple tale of French folk. Pip Donaghy's flummoxed Henri is a fanatic Anglophile who has failed in career after career but believes he is about to get a new start in Britain itself. Alas, the family's attempt to give a friendly breakfast to his prospective boss, who had offered Henri a job in one of his bookshops, is not a success. Denied a move to that haven of culture,

THEATRE

Bristol, Henri despairs — with after-effects as apocalyptic for him, wife Anne and daughter Elizabeth as anything in Nagy's *Weldon Rising*. The trouble, at least for me, is that a simple tale is far from simply told. The play keeps veering from the real to the surreal, from relative authenticity to sheer caricature, and, most disconcertingly, from plain speech to florid poeticism. There is, for instance, a hilarious moment when Anthony, Cal's spruce Nicholas and Suzanne Burden's goshing Heather — bookshop magnate and wife — arrive for a nice meal, only to find the host trying to strangle the hostess. But from then on I had the feeling that it wasn't just the characters who were struggling to achieve control.

Nagy's point seems to be that most of these people — Sheila Gish's wonderfully doty Anne, with her obsessive memories of the Henri she once loved, as well as Michelle Fairley's Elizabeth and her lover, Michael (Danny Sapani), a too attendant who pretends to be a hotel manager —



Sapani, Fairley and Gish play French happy families

are fantasists and dreamers, hooked on their private versions of Barrie's *Never Land*. But she gets pretty incoherent as she adds racism, xenophobia, English blimpishness, American violence and more

to the dramatic mix. Perhaps it is possible to be too bold, too original. Maybe *Never Land* is just that.

BENEDICT NIGHTINGALE

NEW CLASSICAL CDs: Schumann songs; Weber's last opera; more seasons

VOCAL
Hilary Finch

■ **SCHUMANN**
The Songs Volume 2
Keenlyside/Johnson
Hyperion CDDJ33102
*** £14.99
AS THE Schubert Edition of Graham Johnson and Hyperion winds down to its final volumes, the new year brings in the second volume of their new Schumann series, with Simon Keenlyside as soloist, and Johnson completing the performances in the ever-illuminating detail of both his piano playing and his encyclopaedic programme notes.

Keenlyside's bright, word-lively baritone leaps out in the opening *Ballade des Harfners*, the first of Schumann's muscular Goethe settings from *Wilhelm Meister*. These are followed by the four lesser-known *Husarenlieder*, in the tradition of the alternating laconic menace and melancholy of Schumann's and Mahler's *Marches militaires*.

If Keenlyside's baritone is not quite dark enough for these, it certainly has a properly light and witty way with three settings of Emanuel Geibel, the first song a fond salute to the anthology *Des Knaben Wunderhorn*, which was to be a magic carpet of inspiration for both poets and composers. Both Keenlyside and Johnson rise to the considerable demands of Schumann's dark, introspective settings of the poet and pioneer naturalist, Justinus Kerner, from the vast spaces of *Stirb, Lieb und Freud* to the brief, quiet questionings of *Frage* and *Aile Laute*.

ORCHESTRAL
Barry Millington

■ **ENGLISH SEASONS**
ASMF/Marriner
Philips 454 444-2 *** £15.49
NOT only does this delightful "Year in Music" imaginatively represent the changing seasons of the English countryside, but it also gathers together a number of pieces that have certainly not suffered from over-exposure. Three works by Frank Bridge are there: the tone poem *Summer* (heartwarming in its sunlit expansiveness), the

rhapsody *Enter Spring* (twice the length, in spite of its designation) and the short *Christmas Dance* "Sir Roger de Coverley". Also well worth having is Bax's *November Woods*, sometimes compared (a little optimistically) with Sibelius's *Tapiola*, but a substantial piece nevertheless. April — England, by the Mancunian John Foulds (an almost exact contemporary of Bridge), begins in a charmingly folksy way, but builds to a rhetorical climax worthy of Percy Grainger, whose not dissimilar *Harvest Hymn* can also be heard. Deltius's more familiar *On Hearing the First Cuckoo in Spring* is as good a place as any to start, and the whole programme is done with style and spirit by Marriner and the Academy of St Martin in the Fields.

OPERA
John Higgins

■ **WEBER**
Oberon
Nielsen/Seiffert/Deutsches Symphonie-Orchester Berlin/Janowski
RCA 02026 68305 2 (2 CDs)
*** £29.99
THE obstacle against staging Weber's final opera, *Oberon*, is Planché's preposterous li-

breto. Covent Garden commissioned the piece and rivals have been regularly mooted. But until rumour becomes reality CDs will have to suffice, no great hardship when the performance is as powerful as RCA's. Peter Seiffert and Inga Nielsen are a sturdy pair of lovers, consistently bold in tone and well capable of handling the spoken dialogue, of which there is plenty. Seiffert gives the knight Huon an almost Wagnerian lustre as he sets off to abduct the daughter of the Caliph of Baghdad. Nielsen as the object of his search has all the fire power for the score's most famous number, *Overture* apart. *Ocean*, *thou mighty monster*, when they are shipwrecked on their way back to civilisation.

Bo Skovhus and Veselina Kasarova are classy casting for their companions, intended to provide "comic" relief. Marek Janowski draws rich romantic playing and a superb storm from his Berlin orchestra, although he misses the ethereal lightness of Kubelik for the fairy music on the rival DG set.

★ Worth hearing
★★ Worth considering
*** Worth buying

CDs reviewed in *The Times* can be ordered from the Times Music Shop on 0345 023498.

The pleasures of mental cheesecake: Elaine Showalter on a radical theory of cognition that offers food for thought

Steven Pinker, Professor of Psychology and the Director of the Centre for Cognitive Neuroscience at MIT, is a world-class cognitive psychologist and stud-muffin of science, with a winning smile, dimples and long curly hair.

His previous book, *The Language Instinct*, was a bestseller and *How The Mind Works* deserves the same good fortune. Pinker has a remarkable capacity to explain difficult ideas and he writes with the comic verve of Martin Amis or Woody Allen.

He has an endless store of anecdotes, cartoons, children's games, examples, Hollywood gossip, jokes, literary references, movies, riddles and song lyrics to illustrate his theory of the brain, and an effervescent delight in language that manifests itself in clever titles, illuminating metaphors (organisms relate to each other "in a great bush, not a great chain") puns (on serial killer Ted Bundy's stay of execution, the headline "Bundy Beats Date with Chair"), Yiddishisms, witty substitutions, ("old spouses' tale"), alphabetised lists, and apt quotation. I particularly liked a passage from William James on the psychology of the hen. "To the broody hen, the notion would probably seem monstrous that there should be a creature in the world to whom a nestful of eggs was not the utterly fascinating and precious and never-to-be-too-much-upon object which it is to her."

Indeed, *How The Mind Works* is so entertaining a sentence or a paragraph at a time that you can be well into the book before you realise how complex, counter-intuitive and radical a theory of mental activity he is proposing, and how much the pleasure of reading Pinker has to be earned

Something on his mind

HOW THE MIND WORKS
By Steven Pinker
Allen Lane, £25
ISBN 0 175 9130 5



Analysing the mental software

by attention and hard intellectual work. Happily, an investment in the first half of the book pays off for the second half; once the reader grasps Pinker's core ideas from neuroscience and biology — the computational theory of mind and the importance of natural selection — his specific applications come more rapidly, and inspire a conceptual breakthrough as unsettling and exciting as seeing the figures in an autostereogram. (If you have never been able to see the 3-D objects in these computer-generated squiggles, Pinker even has a chapter to help you.)

Pinker is a Darwinian psychologist who believes that the human mind is no longer a mystery, but has been upgraded by science to the status of a problem. His description of the mind as a neural computer processing bytes of information is more than a metaphor: he combines evolution and psychology to demonstrate that "the mind is a system of organs of computation designed by natural selection to solve the problems faced by our evolutionary ancestors in their foraging way of life". Moreover, as he explains, evolutionary psychology is "a radical thesis that discards

the way issues about the mind have been framed for almost a century".

Mental life evolves through natural selection, through trial and error; and even if intelligent life exists on other planets, it must result from the same process. Drawing on studies in biology, neuroscience, anthropology, economics, computer science, robotics and social psychology, Pinker

argues that all kinds of human emotions, traits and activities — perception, reasoning, romantic love, even fashion — can be understood as part of a Darwinian design. From this point of view, beliefs and desires are not social constructs but rather "information", incarnated as configurations of symbols and psychology is "the analysis of mental software".

Thus, he explains, personality is "the child's battle-plan" for competing with siblings; the best predictor of a man's wealth is his wife's looks and vice-versa; information-sharing is economically preferable to product-sharing, since "if I give you a fish, I no longer possess the fish, but if I give you information on how to fish, I still possess the information myself." The tastes for music art and humour can be understood in terms of survival or the pleasure-principle — "auditory cheesecake".

Pinker describes the family as a battlefield for parents, children and siblings. He sees hunting and warfare as basic forms of selection, and uses evidence from primates and ethnography to show how bloodthirsty tribal cultures can be. Below its civilised surface, the academic world is also red in tooth and claw. "Brandishing a switchblade at an academic conference would somehow strike the wrong note, but there is always the stinging question, the devastating riposte, the moralistic outrage, the withering invective, the indignant rebuttal, and

means of enforcement in manuscript reviews and grant panels." Pinker himself is a champion at intellectual jousting with such opponents as Stephen Jay Gould, Larry Rosen and Steven Rose.

Pinker is particularly good on defending the moral freedom of Darwinian evolution against popular notions of biological determinism. "The best strategies for survival may be co-operative rather than competitive: 'Sometimes the most selfish thing a gene can do is build a selfless brain. Genes are a play within the play, not the interior monologue of the players.' Human beings are not determined by their biology; thus, while the genes of alpha-males may be programmed to reproduce, Pinker himself can decide not to have children."

Moreover, despite the social-constructionist theories of modern academic life, where, as he cheerfully admits, "essentialist" is just about the worst thing you can call someone, it may still be scientifically true that there are universal human emotions, differences between the sexes, and a real world. Moreover we tend to project evil motives on neutral or mechanical processes: "the computer running WordPerfect on your desk will continue to fill paragraphs for as long as it does anything at all. Its software will not insistously mutate into depravity like the *Pictures of Dorian Gray*."

How The Mind Works is not the book to take to a desert island — you'll need people around to thrash it out with — but *How The Mind Works* will change the way your mind works, and provide both tools for survival and a lot of mental cheesecake.

The collapse of a dream

George Urban, who died last year, was a sort of thinking man's Harrison Ford — a European intellectual and proud of it. He came here from Hungary shortly after the war and for 13 years he worked in the European Service of the BBC. "We had more than our share of trouble with the philistinism of retired naval commanders who were holding down jobs as administrative officers," he writes, in mildly Walter Mitty mode. "They had the power to annoy but not to thwart our purpose. In almost every case I can remember, the intellectual leadership carried the day."

Urban believed he was eased out for suggesting that Britain's "repressive policies" in Cyprus were incompatible with the BBC's libertarian message to Soviet-occupied Hungary in the aftermath of the 1956 revolution. For the next 30 years, on and off, he was associated with Radio Free Europe, funded by the Government of the United States and broadcasting from Munich to most of the subject nations of Central and Eastern Europe.

This is an autobiographical memoir rather than a history of the station, but it throws interesting light on the resourceful and ferocious war of words which it waged against the Soviet system for almost four decades. It is also a sober reminder of how often the harnessing of emigré effort to any sort of political enterprise threatens to convert it into *Mission Impossible*. There were moments during Urban's three-year stint as director when he could have used a whole quarter-deck of retired naval commanders. They are not always familiar with words like "marxissant,"

Ian McIntyre

RADIO FREE EUROPE AND THE PURSUIT OF DEMOCRACY
By George R. Urban
Yale, £21
ISBN 0 300 06921 9



Urban: warrior of words

"metahistorical" and *Gleichschaltung*, but life on the ocean waves teaches you quite a lot about human nature.

Some of the station's problems were insoluble. German labour laws, generously loaded in favour of the employee, made it well-nigh impossible to cut out dead wood — RFE lost a whole series of lawsuits for wrongful dismissal. It wasn't even particularly easy to get rid of spies. Quite a few communist agents worked undercover for some years as sleepers — at Radio Liberty, RFE's sister-station which broadcast to the Soviet Union. Oleg Tumanov, who rose to become deputy editor-in-chief of the Russian service, turned out to be a Soviet agent. The Americans, Urban writes wryly, found him "suitably undereducated to make a good radio bureaucrat." The American "East Coast intelligentsia" comes in for especially vigorous stick, and Urban feels that he was fighting on two fronts. He writes of the "moral neutrality, and often direct hostility, of an opinion-making segment of the American intelligentsia". His frustration is understandable, although it is difficult to believe that this was really "a more serious hindrance to our work than anything the Soviet side was able to do to thwart us."

Although Urban variously describes himself as a One-Nation Conservative, an advocate of the social policies of the Roman Catholic Church and a confirmed European federalist, there was a time when Margaret Thatcher sought his advice. By the middle Eighties, however, she was causing him problems. The morale of his staff in Munich had been seriously sapped by the success of the Gorbachev charm offensive, and the Iron Lady's assertion that "we can do business with him" were more than he could stomach. He dismisses her as "a Prussian at heart — narrow-gauged, petulant, xenophobic."

Urban says that although his eyes remained dry when the Soviet system finally imploded, he nevertheless felt a pang of loss: "Having a great enemy had been almost as good as having a great friend and — at times of disaffection within our own ranks — arguably better."

His occasional disclaimers of idealism ("I was, of course, aware," he writes, "that the moral regeneration of Eastern and Central Europe was too ambitious an aspiration") are unconvincing; indeed, he concedes sadly that between the summers of 1989 and 1991, he witnessed not just the collapse of the old Soviet system, but also "the evaporation of the dream of a superior and cultured West."

By the time the self-liberation of Eastern Europe was complete, it seemed to him that the "West" had come to mean little more than privatization, a well-stocked supermarket and moral licence, to boot. All those endless disputatious conversations he had conducted over the airwaves with the Silovics and Kestelers and the Brzezinskis and the Madariagars had been so much hot air.

"Nothing except a battle lost can be half so melancholy as a battle won," wrote the Iron Duke. Old philistines do just occasionally get it right.

IMPOSSIBLE to summarise this novel. To do so is to destroy it. Here, language and style are everything, and you simply have to immerse yourself in them and let yourself be swept along, true to the tradition of the *roman fleuve*. If you fight the flow, as you are initially tempted to do, you won't enjoy the book. You have to let back and let its parentheticals, its labyrinthine paragraphs, its comic digressions, wash over you.

It is indeed about something, as a river meanders about a plain, looping and always ultimately going forwards, but for a long time, caught in the loops, we forget about the waiting sea. Rarely have I read a novel in which form so exemplifies content.



THE guests at Dr Robert Watt's retirement party are in for a shock. Bypassing the usual banalities, Robert resolves to tell them of his youthful work with displaced persons in occupied Germany in 1946. His draft speech forms the bulk of Christopher Wallace's fascinating first novel.

Robert, a 24-year-old Glaswegian, is an outsider among British officers stationed in Berlin after the war who use bridge as a substitute for intimacy. He allows himself to be lured into a disastrous liaison with a young nurse. His professional conscientiousness is derided by his superiors and abused by those in his charge. But the miseries of Berlin are nothing to those he endures when transferred to a Russian quarantine camp in southern Poland, where a group of refugees are suffering from an unknown disease.

Conscience smells a rat

Michael Arditti
THE PIED PIPER'S POISON
By Christopher Wallace
Flamingo, £16.99
ISBN 0 00 225627 4

the result of torture or, in the most extreme hypothesis, proposed by Robert's colleague, Arthur Lee, the victims may be ghosts.

Arthur's theory that the refugees are either the spirits or the spiritual descendants (it is never entirely clear) of the townspeople of Hamelin, whose children were enticed by the Pied Piper, is put forward in an academic paper which stands as a counterpoint to Robert's account. Purporting to derive from secret archives, it provides a detailed history of the town's destruction, relocating it from the Middle Ages to the Thirty

Years War. The integration of the two narratives provides the motor of the book.

Wallace's first novel is assured, ambitious and largely successful. By reinterpreting folklore and dovetailing stories from different periods, he marries two of the most popular literary genres of recent years. The Hamelin episodes are much the less effective. The historical detail is fascinating, but the characters come straight out of stock — or, at any rate, *Die Meistersinger*.

The suggestion that the "rats" are the townspeople's inner demons, far from being original, is implied in both the traditional tale and Browning's poem. The novel's true achievement lies in its depiction of the chaos, despair, and privations which poisoned both victors and vanquished in the aftermath of the Second World War.

Clear sight without perfect vision

Michèle Roberts
THE WORLD MORE OR LESS
By Jean Rouaud
Harrill, £14.99
ISBN 1 85046 362

different. He can't be the omniscient storyteller beloved of naturalism and realism, because he has to get close to things and people to see them and even then he's always hazarding guesses and often getting things hilariously wrong. So the way he writes, taking us into his confidence about his uncertainties and frantic speculations, represents his determination to survive and make sense of a life completely outside his control.

What we have, I think, is a novel about growing up in rural France (in a small town in the Loire-Atlantique) which

derives its charm almost entirely from its wry, diffident take on the way in which boys got turned into men in the Fifties and Sixties.

One of Rouaud's enduring themes seems to be masculine experience. His novels are the form of memoirs. His first tracked the life of a grandfather in the First World War, and his second followed the route of a travelling salesman father in the Forties and Fifties. Now, his third novel, intimately confessional and apparently autobiographical, that's to say actually so, focuses and re-focuses on our hero's hapless attempts to score goals

at football, stay out of trouble at boarding school, prove himself a true scion of the revolution at college, and get a girl into bed. Forced to have an intense inner life, because he's always desperately trying to get a grip on reality, he's got no time to be laddish. No anxious strutting and preening.

His vulnerability gives him the honesty of a poet who sees in close-up and whose acute senses work overtime. You know this boy's going to make a good lover because he's so sensual, and when he disappears into the embrace of the gorgeous Theo he is a perfect

A cut above the average

"THE Engraver's Cut" is the witty title of a continuing series of books in which wood engravers are invited to select 25 or 30 blocks for printing by the Rampant Lions Press to represent their work.

Four volumes have so far appeared, in editions of 135 copies. Diana Bloomfield's tiny rural images are in the manner of Bewick's tailpieces: boys fishing with nets, a piper, swans, a lonely cow winding slowly over the lea. Her frog is ready to jump if his beady eye sees you. Her inch-high chair has the clear impress of two buttocks, but also one leg longer than the others — and some of her flourished letter-heads and booklabels are also a trifle unsteady.

Good draftsmanship is crucial to wood-engraving: the shape must be strong, the image immediate. Simon Brett has some very punchy images, such as the lion's head printed in brown for the colophon. His bulbous Grecian urn for the Folio Society cleverly dramatises Keats's contrast between the men and maidens piping their way to oblivion and the clay figures that remain, in and out of time. Elsewhere, he has, as he hints, a failing for symbolic complexity; and he has not solved the engraver's perennial problem of how to represent flesh tones.

Although this is a series, each book is designed separately. Sizes, typefaces and papers are all sympathetically varied. Hilary Paynter is especially good at textures, and some of her overgrown gravestones are appropriately



BIBLIOMANE

printed in a lichen green, in a book itself bound in green. She is good, too, at fur, as in her print of Teddy and Dolly in bed or her muscular, writhing scurrying of rats — a tremendous picture. Some prints are pointed and political. Here's John Major, puppet Pinochio. And who are these little men clambering out of Dolly's Christmas stocking?

The fourth book is devoted to the naive naturalism of the Russian engraver Vadim Prolov, with his animals from the folk-tales of the forest. Compared to English engravings of wildlife — such as Agnes Miller Parker's miracles — these are cartoonish and crude, more like woodcuts (using the plank) than wood engravings (using the end-grain). Many are too dark, with bear cubs reduced to silhouette, and the artist's monogram filling in. But some judicious use of colour helps to lighten them.

The Engraver's Cut books start at £125. Details from the Rampant Lions Press, 20 Ainger Road, London NW3 3AS.

A QUANGO has found that girls like literature more than boys, who think books are cissy and can't see the "point" of poetry. Schools are instructed that boys prefer fantasy and action to emotions and relationships. So for the girls it's *Silas Marner* and Dickens, and for the boys — to counter their underachievement — it's *The Machine Gunners* and *The Cocklepieper's Revenge*. Why not just give them video games? They like those.

And meanwhile schools are to be privatised in the worst wrong way. Instead of helping them all to emulate our world-class private schools, and giving parents the power to force change, the most dismal are to be handed over to the educational equivalent of Securitor. Don't try to teach, contain.

JIM MCCUE

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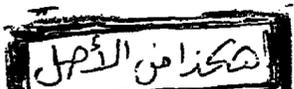
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The way through the wood

Here are two hundred illustrations crossing six centuries in response to Dante's *Divine Comedy*. Muscular Blake watercolours flow into engravings by Gustav Doré. Exquisite medieval miniatures are paired with the exuberance of Michelangelo or the delicacy of Botticelli. Fuseli, Swiss, tortured, crouches by the modern and cinematic Renato Guttuso. The Venetian manuscript uses the zodiac — is celestial, lofty. The Pisan version is full of beasts.

The book is beautifully produced. It has a clarity and sensuousness and draws the reader through the pages. Anyone with an interest in the visual arts, and no interest in Dante, would still find much to pleasure them.

The pictures are seductive because their language is the language of dream and nightmare. This hardly changes. Vast seas, burning flames, known and unknown visitations, lost landscapes that seem familiar, the guide of an inner voice, peril and relief, demons and their furies still torment or rally us, but now we keep these things in the realm of sleep. It would appear that outside of logic or experience, beyond nationality or class, there exists a patterning, an imaging, that marks the difference in us between progress and evolution. We may progress as quickly as we like but we evolve much more slowly.

Whether you call it DNA or instinct, or archetypes or race memory or even the soul, there is a great part of us which cannot be defined or explained or satisfied by what is simply the present. The human psyche reaches through time, perhaps outside of time, and this is why art works on us in the way that it does, and why Dante, who died in 1321, is relevant now on the cusp of the millennium.

The authors, who are American, admit that what T. S. Eliot called "the foremost poem of Christian passion" is little known these days, aside from a few of the gayer bits of the *Inferno*. Well-illustrated here are the envious with their eyelids sewn together, and the hypocrites, who walk round and round, heads bowed, in their gilded cloaks of lead. I am fond of the Sodomites in the Pisan manuscript, busily fanning the flames around each other's bottoms. Naturally, we are kept on these

Jeanette Winterson

IMAGES OF THE JOURNEY IN DANTE'S DIVINE COMEDY

By Charles H. Taylor and Patricia Finley Yale, £35 ISBN 0 300 06834 4

dreads than on the subtleties of the *Purgatorio*, which have little meaning for Protestants. The beatific of the *Paradiso* can seem cloying and fanciful to a cynical century like ours, birthed in the blood of the Great War.

And yet the images presented to us for the *Purgatorio* and the *Paradiso* are of such nimbleness and beauty that we begin to wonder if we have become too mired in despair, like those in the very depths of Hell, whose sin was to shatter out the power of love.

Love is the poem's motive force, when Dante says in the *Paradiso* that he saw "ingathered, bound by love in one mass" (*legato con amore in un volume*), "the scattered leaves of the universe, substance and accident as though fused together... in one simple flame" (*in un semplice lume*), he is using a quantum image perhaps more vivid now than ever before. When



Damned to fame: Bartolomeo di Frusino shows Virgil leading Dante to Ulysses and Diomedes — who persuaded the Trojans to accept the Greeks' gift of a wooden horse — sharing the same tongue of fire in his illustration

modern physics meets the luminosity of a poet's mind, both are invigorated by a new reading.

Art, the real thing, constantly allows new readings as successive generations mine it out of their own truth. The authors, in their 20 inter-related essays that accompany the pictures through the *Commedia*'s three parts, have chosen a Jungian perspective. They offer Dante's journey as the journey of the self towards individuation, and, finally, wholeness. This is not far fetched. The poem itself begins with Dante in mid-life, as he

describes it, lost in a dark wood (*una selva oscura*). There are many who will feel just so, and at least by beginning the journey, as Dante truthfully does, there is a chance we might complete it.

If the poem itself were with the essays and the pictures, the authors' stated intention — that we should read or re-read the *Commedia* — might have succeeded better. As it is, the agreed centre of the book, the poem, is absent. There are various fragments, in translation only, and we are told the story as we travel along, but this has a synthesising effect

which loses beauty of detail and beauty of language. I do not doubt that a great deal can and must be read in translation entirely to the profit of the reader. I only know that in my own experience struggle with a great text in the original is worthwhile because it reveals a completely different work. In this case the pictures themselves are a powerful *lingua franca* that could have cooperated with the unfamiliar Italian plus a basic translation.

The authors' own style is strictly American psychotherapy. Although they promise in

the Introduction to use "common discourse", I have never yet in my daily round heard anyone talk about "transpersonal help in the form of an agent from the realm of the archetypal spirit powers" when they mean to say "angel".

Nevertheless, anyone who senses the dark wood might find purpose in this book: in the pictures, in the readings, in the ghost-text of the *Commedia* itself, that finds a path through the *Inferno* and its purgings, guided "by the love that moves the sun and the other stars".

Farce and furious

I have a confession to make to Michael Dobbs. Most of his books are to be found on my bookshelves, signed copies sent to me by the author who has been my friend for 20 years. But I had never read one before being commissioned to write this review. I tell myself that I have been too busy; but, was I perhaps guilty of being a little disdainful, too?

Certainly, the surprise on reading my first Dobbs is how well he writes. He is at his best in descriptive passages: of landscapes, of an unfamiliar culture, of suffering, and of sadism. For this book is not confined to the shenanigans of Westminster, and is more than just a red box and bonk novel. As one strand in the book he has chosen a more demanding subject, the conflict between the Chinese Government and the Buddhist community of Tibet.

Dobbs describes in harrowing detail, in scenes so disturbing that you cannot shake them from your mind, the repression, torture and murder of Tibetan followers of the Dalai Lama. He has acquired a good knowledge of Buddhism and Tibet, possibly from his wife who is a learned Buddhist, and these passages radiate indignation and the spirit of resistance.

The book carries us into the future. The Dalai Lama dies, but leaves enough signs to indicate to his followers that he will soon be reincarnated in the form of a baby born in London. This development sucks into the plot a Member of Parliament, Thomas Goodfellowe, the hero of Dobbs's last book. He is a goodie, in sharp contrast to the satanic Francis Urquhart, who brightened Dobbs's first novels and their television adaptations.

Goodfellowe is going through a rough patch: his son has drowned, his wife has gone mad and his teenage daughter has got pregnant. Fortunately, the gloom is lifted, at least for the reader, when he takes on a new secretary. Mickey Ross enjoys having sex with a foreign office minister, predictably in his room in the Commons, but less conventionally in a broom cupboard near the crypt under

Michael Portillo

THE BUDDHA OF BREWER STREET
By Michael Dobbs
HarperCollins, £16.99
ISBN 0 00 225412 3

the Palace of Westminster, and on the top deck of a bus in Berlin.

You may by now be thinking that I have muddled two books, and that no author could produce within one set of covers two such jarring styles, juxtaposing the disturbing content of an Amnesty International report alongside scenes of Whitehall farce so trashy that Edwina Currie might have written them.

But if there is confusion, it is Dobbs's. It is as though he felt the need to say something serious on a subject about which he cares, but remem-



Dobbs: budding Buddhist

bered just in time that the book has to sell. In the last hundred pages, it descends into implausibility as the Chinese Embassy employs Triad gangs who scurry around Soho searching out all babies under the age of two in a finale in which King Herod seems to meet the Keystone Kops. Goodfellowe single-handedly outwits the People's Republic and saves the future of Buddhism and Tibet. And it turns out his daughter isn't pregnant after all.

It's not a bad read, and Dobbs holds your attention. Maybe he thinks that he has found a good way of alerting a wide audience to the Tibetan cause. But it left me wondering whether he might not produce something quite different, and better, if he could free himself from the tyranny of churning out bestsellers.



The Dome of the Rock: Jerusalem's holy Muslim shrine, threatened by terrorists

Have pity on the City of Peace

In poignant ways, these two books show how and why the Middle East peace process, which was proclaimed at Oslo in 1993 with such hopeful fanfare, is now in ruins. A report submitted to Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu last May by Martin Indyk, the retiring United States Ambassador, predicted that Israel would soon become embroiled in a new regional war with the Arabs if the present Likud Government continues its policy of expanding Jewish settlements. He also predicted the "escalation of violence in the West Bank on a scale we have not seen so far."

Ben Wicks's *Dawn of the Promised Land* is perhaps the first of a series of books likely to appear celebrating the 50th anniversary of the founding of the state of Israel: it traces the history of Zionist settlement in Palestine from the Balfour Declaration of 1917 to the Israeli War of Independence in 1948. Wicks's narrative is adulatory, descriptive and anecdotal; its chief merit is the inclusion of moving reminiscences of settlers, Holocaust survivors and founding members of the Jewish State. Unabashedly partisan, however, Wicks's study fails to provide the critical and detached perspective that is sorely needed if there is to be peace. There is no analysis of those complex events which brought deadly conflict to a region where Arabs and Jews had hitherto co-existed in relative harmony. There is no serious discussion of the Pales-

tinian position and no attempt to consider the implications of the permanent exclusion of some 750,000 Palestinian refugees from their homeland after the 1948 war.

Such myopia bodes ill for peace. More realistic is *A Golden Basin Full of Scorpions* by Con Coughlin, foreign editor of *The Sunday Telegraph*. This is fair to both sides. Coughlin points out that Yasser Arafat is in his own way as recalcitrant as Netanyahu and that both Israelis and Palestinians have been infected by the moral corruption resulting from the deterioration in the Holy City. Unless a solution for the future of Jerusalem can be found that will satisfy both sides, there can be no hope of peace. Coughlin's searching investigation shows that such a reconciliation is an impossible dream. He has interviewed members of the Islamic group Hamas and those members of the Jewish Underground who

have plotted to blow up the Dome of the Rock, the third holiest shrine in the Islamic world, in order to rebuild the Jewish Temple. With Iran vowing to develop a nuclear capacity within the next five years, any such attempt could easily provoke the kind of apocalyptic configuration foretold by the prophets. Coughlin reflects on the tragic irony of a City of Peace teeming with violence and hatred, as he watches a blind man almost trampled to death in the stampede of Jewish, Christian and Muslim worshippers rushing through the narrow streets of the Old City to pray at their respective shrines. One can only conclude with him that instead of praying for the city, we should rather pity Jerusalem.

Ticket to a new found land

CHARLES SIMIC and Matthew Sweeney are two poets one could broadly describe as being on the Surrealist, as opposed to the documentary, side of the argument. In their poems, you get a feeling of innocents abroad, of Pandora messing with the locks, of Hansel and Gretel in an unendingly dirty and dangerous world. In Sweeney's *The Bridal Suite* (Cape, £7.99, ISBN 0 224 04328 5) you may find "a shoelace and a penis lying in a field". In Simic's *Looking For Trouble* (Faber, £3.99, ISBN 0 571 19233 5), in a poem called *Landscape with Crutches*, "my mother, mind you, using two knives for crutches as she squats to pee."

Both have come some way to be where they are: Simic was born in Belgrade in 1938, reached America in 1954 and has published poetry (in English) since 1961. Sweeney was born in Donegal in 1952 and has moved to London where he has lived for the past 20 years. Simic has written a generous blurb for Sweeney, who has dedicated a poem to Simic, and featured him heavily in his 1994 anthology, *Emergency Kit*.

I am really very surprised, then, to find them such different poets — even though I've been reading them for 15 years. At a time when so many American poems are windy and obvious, the threat, obliqueness and economy of Simic's poems are especially welcome. Given his European roots in Surrealism, naive art, folklore and history, there is no American now writing whom I would rather read. At the same time, though, it would be quite wrong to suppose that Simic has merely gone on trading on his birthright. His gift seems as portable and universal as a corkscrew. You feel you could set him down anywhere with any subject, and he would

Michael Gove on Gordon Brown, the man who would be Labour's conscience

Radical roots pulled up from the left field

Call no man a happy subject for a biography until he is dead. Especially politicians. Interim, or campaign, biographies of political figures are notoriously hard to write and often enjoy shelf lives scarcely longer than glossy magazines. Who now reads Robert Harris's *The Making of Neil Kinnock*, Peter Bartram's *David Steel*, or even my own study of Michael Portillo, *The Future of the Right*?

Like troops over the top in the Somme, the appearance of new campaign biographies continues relentlessly, and the trail of biographers' bleached bones among the remainder piles does not act as a disincentive. Tony Blair was the subject of two, rather good but sadly not bestselling, biographies before he even became Prime Minister. Now it is the turn of other Cabinet colleagues, before many of them have made a mark on the Statute Book, to be commemorated between hard covers. First off the starting-block since May has been Paul Routledge with his biography of Gordon Brown. Routledge is an accomplished biographer. His latest

work, although clearly written with all the speed which a skilled reporter can command, is more than just an extended profile. The author's intimate knowledge of the Labour movement and closeness to Brown's inner circle lends the work considerable authority. Routledge is clearly a fan of the Chancellor. He would not have enjoyed the access he has without making his allegiances overt, but the book succeeds in allowing the reader a sufficiently broad view of the subject to allow less flattering conclusions to be drawn. Brown is portrayed as new Labour's conscience, sensibly pragmatic but more respectful of the Left's plieties than the mercurial Blair. His journey from student radical and disciple of Gramsci to friend of business and anti-inflationary hawk is sympathetically rendered. The process is depicted as a development of Brown's ethical principles, which are



Hiring the spot: Brown turns on the Stock Exchange

rooted in the Scottish communitarianism he learnt in his father's manse. In order to position Brown as the great Left hope of this Government, Routledge presents a view of Blair which is not always to the Prime Minister's advantage. Brown comes across as not only the intellectual powerhouse of this administration, the Scottish engineer who keeps the ship of state afloat in contrast to its "charming captain", but also the more principled of the pair. The best chapter in the book, "Death of a Hero", deals with the succession of John Smith in such a way as to suggest the crown was Brown's for the taking but he stood aside for the ambitious Blair so as not to damage the modernising project. It is not a view as widely held in Westminster as it may be in Dumfrieshire but Routledge's telling of the story is packed with juicy detail. Brown is likely to be a pivotal figure in his party's fortunes for the next decade and for anyone who wants to understand the principles which animate him it is worth negotiating the book's occasional longeurs.

knock you out one of his compact, sinister echoing poems, say, *At the Cocktail Party* or *Crazy About Her Stripes*. A little grin at the publisher: *Looking For Trouble* is a "selection of early and more recent poems". It actually has a 12-year gap in it, with not even a blank page to indicate it, though — and this is greatly to Simic's credit — the reader would probably never guess. For a full chronological sense of Simic, you have to hold the book open at page 88, and at that point read his earlier (1995) selected, *Frightening Toys*. I don't know if there are any plans for a *Collected Poems*, but that's a book I'd love. Then I could really give myself a fright.

If Simic has managed to abstract and universalise himself, Matthew Sweeney seems much where he always was: a rooted and deliberately provincial poet. A Simic poem has no particular voice, being

MICHAEL HOFMANN

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ICE SKATING

Cousins enjoys a share of spotlight

FROM ANGELO COURT IN MILAN

THE absence of two leading Russians led to a few surprises on the opening afternoon of the men's European figure skating championships here yesterday.

Alexei Urmanov, the Olympic champion and winner last year, was missing with a long-standing groin injury, and Ilya Kulik, also citing injury, was resting ahead of the Olympic Games, in Nagano, Japan, next month.

Russian skaters, though, held the top three places after the short programme. Alexei Yagudin, the leader, Alexander Abr and Evgeni Plushenko, 15, all performed the triple axel, triple toe-loop with ease. The free programme tonight will surely be a battle between these three men, although Yagudin would appear to have a slight advantage after his superior presentation yesterday.

Phillipe Candalo, of France, the runner-up last year, disappointed with a flawed double axel and a lack of revolution on a spin. "Early afternoon is not my time, he said. "I skate better in the evening, when my legs are stronger." The time schedule of championships is known in advance and it might have been sensible for him to have revised his training accordingly. He was *ruined* last night.

Steven Cousins, of Great Britain, skated probably the finest short programme of his career but finished seventh. The triple axel combination that has dogged him in the past was clean, as was the solo triple lutz. Delighted with his performance, his reaction to his placing was: "I'm gutted. I don't know what I have to do."

Robert Tebby, his coach, said: "Steven's performance was quality." Then, obviously referring to Andrijs Vlasenco and Viacheslav Zagorodniuk, who both made significant errors on jumps but finished fourth and sixth respectively, Tebby added: "No one who made mistakes should be above Steven."

Maverick spinner responding to management faith in his ability

Tufnell retreating from controversy

Alan Lee believes that The Oval match-winner is more conscious of his responsibilities

Phil Tufnell had enjoyed a long lie-in and now he was puffing on a cigarette, peering at a Jamaican noon through gawdy, yellow shades. Superficially, he looked every inch the miscreant he is continually painted. The wayward talent, the artful dodger, Tufnell has never cared much about how he is perceived but the stereotyping now raises hackles. "Not many people know me," he said. "Everyone just thinks they do."

Tufnell has embarked on his seventh England tour, a figure exceeded only by Alec Stewart among the party. "Not bad," he grinned, "for someone who is supposed to be a difficult tourist." Another flawed perception, then, or has the maverick matured? Perhaps, he suggests, a little of each.

In the eight years since his England debut, Tufnell has played only 28 Tests, a barometer of official suspicion. Several patently less skilled spin bowlers have been chosen ahead of him and more than once it has widely been assumed his international days were over.

Even last autumn, soon after winning a Test against Australia, his career looked jeopardised by failure to submit to a drugs test. He has lived his cricket life on the brink of conventional acceptability and there have been those in high places inclined to give up on him.

That he is back once more reflects on the ability of the present England management. Now he is being accommodated, directed and encouraged, he has responded positively, not least in speaking with rare frankness about himself.

"I have never gone out of my way to create an image or sell myself," he said. "I have never said I am this kind of cricketer or that kind, and it has never bothered me what people think of me."

So, has he been misunderstood all these years? Has the impression of a prickly, furtive individual been mistaken? Have his misdemeanours all been imagined? Tufnell is not glib enough to pretend there is nothing he would change, but he is scornful of those who put him down through appearance and assumption.

"I was naive in the early years. Having a shave and looking smart



Tufnell reflects on a career clouded by a series of incidents that have helped to limit his England appearances to 28 in eight years

were things I didn't give much attention to. That comes with being 24. I have realised since that things have to be done in a certain way.

"A lot can happen between 24 and 31. You are changing all the time. Every time you put on a cricket blazer you are a different man, yet people cling to their old judgments. I have never fallen out with anyone on tour and I find it a very enjoyable life, but it is hard work and, in three months away, you can't be bright-eyed every minute.

"Things happen. A relative might die. Should I hide my feelings if that happened? I wear my heart on my sleeve and I like people who do the same, who show their character through their emotions."

In his bowling, however, Tufnell is now successfully concealing his feelings, a mark of the truisms that spinners only reach their peak when past 30. "You can bowl well or badly at any age but, with experience, you

I wear my heart on my sleeve. I like people who do the same, who show their character

learn to sit back and take a situation for what it is.

"I have got better at being patient and at not getting down on myself. I used to watch John Emburey bowl a bad ball, get out for four and turn on his heel for the next one, quite expressionless. I wondered how he did it, because I'd be ranting at myself, thinking I had let people down."

Tufnell's new, phlegmatic approach helped him last summer when he turned up for the first five Tests without making the final XI. "Everyone kept saying how frustrated I must be but I still felt very much part of the squad. The management made me feel wanted, which has not necessar-

ily happened in the past, so when I did get in the side for The Oval it didn't seem such a big deal."

The complexion of England's summer, and consequently the mood prevailing as this tour begins, was transformed in that game, most potently by Tufnell's 11 wickets. "It's as well as I've ever bowled," he said. "And it was a fantastic game to play in."

It might be thought that Tufnell has once more overtaken Robert Croft as first-choice slow bowler, just as Croft overtook him in New Zealand last winter. Tufnell refuses to look at it so simplistically. "I never think along the lines of a man in possession. I don't see it as a competition to play for England."

He denies that this suggests any

lack of drive. "Anyone thinking that is making a negative out of a positive. I have a lot of ambition and desire and, although some people might find it hard to believe, I enjoy playing cricket. I love the boys, love the atmosphere of playing for England." Remarkably, he is submitting to a training regime, that would previously have been an anathema, a tribute not just to altered attitude but to the attentions of England's fitness experts, Wayne Morton and Dean Riddle.

Tufnell may have a significant role in the first Test at Sabina Park, where the reaid pitch is offering him a scrap or two before the tour is out, because he has not suddenly conquered non-conformity. Just for now, though, the portents are good. "Tell them I'm fit, keen and champing at the bit," he said, rising, and, though he reached automatically for those cigarettes, I rather think he is.

SQUASH

Evans and Cairns on song for Maesteg

BY COLIN MCQUILLAN

THE Anglo-Welsh axis from Maesteg maintained its lead in the National Super League this week with a 2-1 win at Halifax that owed everything to the improving skill of David Evans, the young Welsh champion, and the plain durability of Mark Cairns, the British champion.

The Halifax Insurance side looked good for a home win when Lee Beachill, one of the more promising young professionals, defeated Hadrian Stiff at third string 6-10, 9-4, 9-7, 9-4 in 40 minutes. Evans, though, levelled brilliantly with a 38-minute, 3-9, 9-7, 9-1 dismissal of Marcus Berrett at second string, then Cairns fought doggedly from 3-6 and 4-7 down in the fifth game against Adam Toes to seal the first-string rubber 4-9, 10-8, 4-9, 9-5, 10-8 in 69 minutes for Dunraven Maesteg.

"It was almost worth losing the points," David Campion, the Halifax team manager, said. "The club was packed and the action just went on until the very last rally."

The win leaves the Welsh side on 20 points at the head of the NSL table, one in front of Rolands, Manchester, who exploited the continued absence from the ICL Lion Herts team of Simon Parke, Del Harris and Chris Walker, all England internationals.

Lion Herts dropped the home points when Mark Challoner went down 9-5, 4-9, 0-9, 7-9 in 49 minutes to Nick Taylor at first string and Lee Drew lost a 31-minute third-string rubber 4-9, 2-9, 8-10 to Clive Leach. Julian Wellings managed a consolation point for the champions.

Ellis Lingfield, led at home for the first time this season by Peter Nicol, the world No 2, moved into third place with a 2-1 win over Umet Surbiton. Nicol was drawn into two tie-breaks against Tony Hands, before winning his first competitive outing of the year 10-8, 8-10, 9-5, 9-3. Stephen Meads won at third string to clinch the home points for the Surrey side.

THE TIMES

SATURDAY

20P

This Saturday, make a date with the Saturday Times, including the new 100-page glossy magazine.

SHEEHAN on BRIDGE

By ROBERT SHEEHAN, BRIDGE CORRESPONDENT

The prize for the best-played hand at the 1997 Lederer Memorial Trophy was won by David Burn. Burn is the coach of the British team, and one of the best writers on the game. I think his "Tales of Jaundiced Jim" in *International Popular Bridge Monthly*, rueful accounts of his trials at the bridge table, are the funniest articles being published at present.

Dealer South Love all IMPs

♠ K84 ♠ A910988 ♠ 8732 ♠ K97643 ♠ VQ752 ♠ A10 ♠ A9105 ♠ A1096 ♠ K7 ♠ Q54

S W N E

1 NT Pass 2 C Pass
2 H Pass 3 D Pass
3 NT All Pass

Contract: Three No-Trumps by South Lead: six of clubs

The One No-Trump opening showed 15-17 points. Two Clubs was Stayman (asking South to bid a four-card major) and Three Diamonds was natural and forcing.

The defence took the first four tricks in clubs. East discarding two spades and South a heart. Then West switched to the jack of spades. How should declarer play?

Burn thought correctly that the jack of spades had to be from Jx or Jxx — with Jxx West would lead a low one. So to get more information, he continued with the ace and king of hearts. When West played the jack on the second round, that was more likely to be from a holding of Jx than QJx.

Now, after cashing the ace of spades and the king of diamonds, he played a low diamond. When West followed low, it seemed that his

initial distribution was likely to have been three spades, two hearts and four clubs. In that case, he had four diamonds, and Burn bravely finessed the ten, thus bringing in the suit.

□ The Macallan International Bridge Pairs Championship 1998, in association with *The Times* and *The Sunday Times*, will be played at The White House Hotel, Albany Street, London NW1 from Wednesday January 21 to Friday January 23, 1998.

Session Times and Prizes: Wednesday, 5.30-11.00pm, £12.50; Thursday, noon-4pm, £12.50; Thursday, 5.30-11pm, £12.50; Thursday, full day, £20; Friday, 12.30-6.30pm, £17.50; All sessions £3.

Tickets and information from The Macallan Box Office, 31 Queens Road, Mortlake, London SW14 8PH. Tel: 0181 878 5844.

KEENE on CHESS

By RAYMOND KEENE, CHESS CORRESPONDENT

Sadler's triumph

Matthew Sadler, the co-British champion, scored one of the greatest triumphs of his career when he dominated the Hastings Premier tournament, finishing ahead of other powerful contenders including the Leigh Grand Prix prize-winner Mark Hebden, the experienced grandmaster Dr John Nunn and the promising teenager Luke McShane.

Today, I give one of Sadler's wins and the full results from the tournament.

White: Eduard Rozentalis
Black: Matthew Sadler

Hastings Premier December 1997

Sicilian Defence

1 e4 c5
2 c3 Nf6
3 e5 Nd5
4 d4 cxd4
5 cxd4 d6
6 Be3 Ne6
7 Bb5+ Nc6
8 Nc3 dxc5
9 d5 e6
10 Bg4 Nxa4
11 Qxa4 b5
12 Nxb5 Bc7
13 Nc3 Nd4
14 Qd1 Bf5
15 Kf1 g6
16 Ng2 Bg7

Diagram of final position

Times book

The *Times Winning Moves 2* contains 240 chess puzzles from *International Grandmaster Raymond Keene's* daily column in *The Times*, and is available now from bookshops or from B. T. Batsford Ltd (tel: 01376 321276 at £5.99 plus postage and packing).

□ Raymond Keene writes on chess Monday to Friday in Sport and in the Weekend section on Saturday.

Hastings Premier final cross-table

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	Pts
1 Sadler	*	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	7
2 Relange	0	*	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	5 1/2
3 Rozentalis	0	1/2	0	*	1	1	1	1	1	1	5
4 Trachsel	0	1/2	0	1/2	*	1	1	1	1	1	5
5 Plaskett	0	0	1	1	1	*	1	1	1	1	4 1/2
6 Nunn	1/2	0	1/2	1/2	1/2	0	*	1	1	1	4
7 Hebden	0	1/2	0	0	0	1	1	*	1	1	4
8 Fergus	1/2	1/2	0	1/2	1/2	0	1	1	*	1	3 1/2
9 McShane	1/2	0	1/2	0	1/2	0	1	1	0	*	3
10 Ward	1/2	1/2	0	1/2	0	1/2	1/2	1/2	1/2	*	3

In the above table, 1 represents a win, 1/2 a draw and 0 a loss

By Raymond Keene

White to play. From the game Kasparov — Browne, Banja Luka 1979. World champion Garry Kasparov is a very dangerous attacking player and has always been. Here is an example from his youth. How did he finish off his American opponent?

Solution on page 42

http://www.the-times.co.uk

CHANGING TIMES

WORD-WATCHING

By Philip Howard

BRAXY
a. A disease in sheep
b. Cross and ill-tempered
c. A man-propelled carriage

BUMP-BALL
a. A Oxbridge Blue party
b. An occurrence at cricket
c. A painful collision

BUM DOCK DOUSSE
a. An early marial art
b. An evening-dress kit
c. Glaswegian water cannon

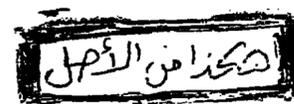
NOMBRIL
a. A heraldic point
b. A gymnastic device
c. A nameplate

Answers on page 42

By Raymond Keene

White to play. From the game Kasparov — Browne, Banja Luka 1979. World champion Garry Kasparov is a very dangerous attacking player and has always been. Here is an example from his youth. How did he finish off his American opponent?

Solution on page 42



TENNIS: KOURNIKOVA AND HEWITT ARE BROUGHT DOWN TO EARTH IN ADIDAS INTERNATIONAL

Youthful ambition dampened by rain

FROM JULIAN MUSCAT
TENNIS CORRESPONDENT
IN SYDNEY

AFTER Tuesday's rare excesses, a more familiar feel returned to the Adidas International tournament here yesterday, when fresh-faced youth was finally felled by the sword of experience.

Neither Lleyton Hewitt nor Anna Kournikova, two blond and blossoming talents, could quite maintain the sequence of upsets that have percolated this event. Each lost in three sets, yet each felt the outcome might have been different without incessant interruptions because of rain.

Michael Tebbutt, who mastered Hewitt, and Lindsay Davenport, the No 2 seed who accounted for Kournikova, are seasoned campaigners — and, therefore, well-versed in handling such intrusions. Hewitt even served for the match at 5-3 in the deciding set, although Kournikova, a semi-finalist at Wimbledon, never quite got that close.

Indeed, after a hesitant start, Kournikova was a transformed player after the first rain-break. Her frustration at the onset of the second saw her stand defiantly on the baseline, ready to serve, long after Davenport had sought sanctuary from a light drizzle. With her shoulders braced and her head thrown back, she concluded her fit of pique by slamming a ball into the back netting in frustration.

One could sympathise. The Russian was in full flight, dispatching a stream of winners beyond her opponent. For three games she looked quite unstoppable — only to emerge from the players' room for the second time in less flamboyant mood. She was never able to recreate that passage of magic throughout the rest of the match, which embraced five stoppages in all.

"I think I played pretty well," she reflected, "but it was the first time I have ever played in conditions like that. I was a bit tired from waiting around for so long, otherwise I think the result could have been different."

Kournikova's sense of disappointment was compounded by the restraints inherent in her age. At 15, her four appearances are restricted to a maximum of 13 per year. Anxious to draw the maximum experience from each outing, she therefore felt com-



Kournikova is a study in concentration as she heads for defeat at the hands of Davenport in Sydney yesterday

prehensively short-changed here.

Kournikova later vented her frustration at the Women's Tennis Association rules. "If I could play more often, I wouldn't have to worry so much about losing my first match and then not playing again for a while," she said.

This almost certainly explains her slow starts. Certainly

Davenport had all but secured the first set before Kournikova found her range.

Hewitt, for his part, had his six-game winning streak ended by an opponent 11 years his senior. He glossed over any sense of disappointment by accentuating the positives. There were plenty to choose from, notably his victories over Andre Agassi and Jonas

Bjorkman. It is not often that a schoolboy defeats the man whose poster holds pride of place on his bedroom wall, as well as the No 4.

Hewitt, 16, maintained that his immediate goal remains to make a successful transition from the junior to senior ranks. He was the lowest-ranked player, at No 550, to win an event on the ATP Tour

when he triumphed in Adelaide last week. "This has been a great experience because it showed I can compete at this level," he said, "but when I am in the locker room I still take a second look at people like Andre Agassi and Pat Rafter."

Hewitt's dramatic impact on the game has allowed his compatriot and the world No 2 a little breathing space. Rafter,

the US Open champion, has been besieged since his return to these shores before Christmas. He remains the same unpolished character off the court and his game remains sharp upon it, as he proved in the second round yesterday with a straight-sets dismissal of Alberto Berasategui.

Greg Rusedski, by contrast, appeared far from serene when succumbing to Mark Philippoussis in the Colonial Classic, an eight-man exhibi-



Pete Sampras, the defending champion, above, was yesterday made the No 1 seed for the Australian Open, which begins on Monday.

SEEDINGS: Men: 1, P Sampras (AUS); 2, P Rafter (AUS); 3, M Chang (CHN); 4, J Bjorkman (SWE); 5, G Rusedski (GB); 6, P Korda (CZE); 7, C Moye (ESP); 8, M Sumner (AUS); 9, M Chang (CHN); 10, S Bruguera (ESP); 11, A Corretja (ESP); 12, G Kuerten (ESP); 13, G Nandoriya (IND); 14, F Santoro (ITA); 15, M Philippoussis (FRA); 16, A Costa (ESP). Women: 1, M Hingis (SWE); 2, L Davenport (USA); 3, A Cozzoli (ITA); 4, I Majoli (CZE); 5, M Pierce (GB); 6, S Park (KOR); 7, A Sanchez Vicario (ESP); 8, C Martinez (ESP); 9, S Taniguchi (JPN); 10, A Hahn (GER); 11, B Schickel (AUS); 12, S Apperly (AUS); 13, L Raymond (USA); 14, D Van Rooy (RSA); 15, R Ungari (ITA); 16, A Sugiyama (JPN).

tion round-robin in Melbourne. An indication of the importance of the event was evident in Pete Sampras's defeat by Gustavo Kuerten, but the Great Britain No 1 looked far from the form that swept him to the rankings last year. Philippoussis took full advantage, coming through 7-5, 6-4 in 64 minutes.

Meanwhile, Tim Henman, whose second-round match against Alberto Portas was rained off with the Briton one set and a game to the good, learnt yesterday that he had missed a seeded place at the Australian Open next week by one ranking place. Rusedski, the No 5 seed, gains that distinction for the first time in his career.

CRICKET

Ponting's example spurs on Australia

BY OUR SPORTS STAFF

RICKY PONTING followed an innings of 84 with some outstanding work in the field as Australia overwhelmed New Zealand by 131 runs in Sydney yesterday to seal their place in the final of the World Series Cup, in which they will meet South Africa.

Even without the Waugh twins, Australia, led by Shane Warne, managed to score 250. Their opponents, after losing 50 for the loss of only one wicket, then fell apart, their last nine wickets falling for 68 runs.

Ponting, one of only three Test regulars in the Australian team, was responsible for two brilliant run-outs and took an exceptional diving catch in the covers to dismiss Parore.

The day-night match was reduced from 50 to 48 overs after two interruptions because of rain and New Zealand's allocation was reduced to 47 overs as a penalty for their slow over-rate. It was the first time in 12 years that Australia had taken the field in a limited-overs international without at least one of the Waughes. The Queensland opener, Jimmy Maher, called up with influenza — was among the early failures as Australia slipped to 36 for three.

Ponting, whose runs came from only 103 balls, ensured a reasonable total by adding 132 for the fourth wicket with Darren Lehmann, who contributed 52 in 69 balls. Michael Bevan and Adam Gilchrist also contributed some telling blows.

Warne bowled superbly after bringing himself into the attack after 21 overs, finishing with two wickets, while Paul Reffel was typically economical. Ian Harvey, an all-rounder, having failed when promoted to No 3 to act as a pinch-hitter, redeemed himself by taking three for 17 with his medium-paced bowling.

Although New Zealand can still equal Australia's total of three wins in the qualifying round, they have the inferior record in matches between the sides.

SPORT IN BRIEF

Anurasiri makes his mark

CRICKET: Don Anurasiri, the left-arm spinner, ended a four-year absence from Sri Lanka's team by taking three for 65 to send Zimbabwe from 110 for one to 251 for nine at the close of the first day of the second Test match at the Sinhalese Sports Club ground in Colombo.

Anurasiri, whose last Test was in the three-match series in India in early 1994, received effective support from Muttiah Muralitharan, the off-spinner, who took two wickets. Murray Goodwin was Zimbabwe's top scorer with 73 but was dropped by Anurasiri off his own bowling when on seven.

Bugner's title

BOXING: Joe Bugner, 47, regained the Australian heavyweight title when he beat Colin Wilson, 25, on a unanimous points decision on the Gold Coast in Queensland yesterday. Despite the win, the former British, Commonwealth and European champion, who relinquished his Australian title more than 12 months ago, said 1998 would be his last year in the ring.

Call to Cameron

BADMINTON: Neil Cameron, 51, from Scotland, will continue the British hold on the position of chief executive of the International Badminton Federation, the sports governing body, when he succeeds David Shaw, of England, in July. Cameron is at present the IBF's vice-president, director of tournaments and chairman of the rules committee.

Turks banned

WEIGHTLIFTING: Four Turkish weightlifters, including Derya Arslanoglu, a world record-holder, face bans after testing positive for performance-enhancing drugs at the recent world championships in Thailand.

RUGBY UNION: BRISTOL PAY PENALTY FOR INFRINGEMENT IN STOPPAGE TIME

Cusworth sets out his priority

LES CUSWORTH, the director of rugby at Worcester, ordered his side to concentrate on the league after seeing the Jewson League first division club to a surprise 14-2 victory over Bristol in the Tetley's Bitter Cup on Tuesday.

Worcester earned themselves a lucrative fifth-round home tie against Newcastle, the Allied Dunbar Premiership first division leaders, by beating a Bristol side two divisions above them.

But the former England threequarters coach said: "This season we've said that winning promotion out of Jewson League One was our main aim. We have a vital game against Morley on Saturday and we must now focus on that."

"We still have a long way to go, but this is a big day for the club and for Worcester as a whole. We'll enjoy this moment, but we've got to look beyond this."

"We've used this fixed squad of 23 players all season and, when the side was picked for the original game, the decision to omit club captain Bruce Fenley was a statement of intent. I applaud him for his attitude."



Smith, the Worcester match-winner, is congratulated.

Cusworth's side secured victory through a stoppage-time penalty goal from Tim Smith, the former Gloucester full back. Bristol trailed until just before the final whistle, when Ireland international fly half Paul Burke kicked his fourth penalty goal to give his side a narrow 12-11 lead.

"I thought we had got ourselves out of jail, as we controlled the second half,"

Burke said. "But we then lost a strike against the head at a crucial point, which was a big disappointment and we penalised at the resulting ruck that allowed Worcester to clinch the game."

John Mitchell, the Sale coach, was forced to endure "the worst pressure of my life" before the Premiership first division side overcame second division Moseley to book a

place in the fifth round. The beaten finalists last season hung on grimly in pouring rain for an 181 fourth-round victory at The Reddings that earned them a home tie against Newbury on Sunday, January 25.

"It's much easier being a player, that was the worst pressure of my life," the former All Black and an England assistant coach, said. "We were the better side but, at the end of the day, we made some errors and the conditions just got worse."

Sale led 15-0 early in the second half after tries from Richard Smith, the scrum half, and Paul Smith, a prop forward, — both from lineouts — but lost their grip and Moseley dominated the final quarter as they pressed for a shock victory. Neil Mitchell, a second-row forward, scored a 65th-minute try but Man Jones, the fly half, was unable to add to his earlier brace of penalties.

"We paid the price for a lack of patience," Mitchell said. "I thought our scrum was awesome and the lineout very effective. But I am still worried over the ball retention of the side."

Scotland select Holmes to play Italy

BY KEVIN FERRE

SIMON HOLMES, the London Scottish flanker, was given a welcome distraction from the ear problems of his back-row colleague Simon Fenn yesterday when he was named by Scotland to face Italy in Treviso next week.

Holmes, a former Cambridge University captain, made light of the fact that he will be making his international debut at the age of 31. "I missed around four years of rugby because of injury, so I don't have as many miles on the clock as I might," he said.

Cumbrian-born and educated, Holmes qualifies for Scotland because his mother comes from Dumfries. At only 5ft 10in and 14st 7lb, he is regarded as an old-fashioned open-side specialist, and is quite comfortable confronting larger opponents.

"Last summer's tour of South Africa with Scotland was very important for me from that point of view," he said. "I did OK playing for Scotland last season, but down there we were performing against much bigger opposition and that gives the selectors confidence that you can cope with the physical requirements."

His inclusion alongside Adam Roxburgh, who made his debut at open-side against Australia in November, and Rob Wainwright, who plays at open-side for Caledonia Reds, is indicative of Scotland's approach. "We're on record as saying that the back-row rules have changed somewhat and that the No 8 has to play more like a flanker. We may well have looked at this particular combination prior to this, but injuries to one or two people prevented us from so doing,"

Richie Dixon, the national coach, said. Dixon said that a niggling groin problem had delayed Holmes's call-up this season, but that Eric Peters, of Bath, who performed solidly against Australia and South Africa, had been unlucky to miss out.



Holmes: belated call

Others new to the squad are Carmy Murray, 22, the Hawk utility back, and Gavin Scott, 23, the Dundee HSFP hooker, both selected as replacements. Also in for the first time is George Graham, a prop and one of four Newcastle players in the side. Gary Armstrong — whose form earned him the place ahead of Andy Nicol, of Bath — and Doddie Weir, return for the first time since the five nations' championship. Alan Tait, who missed the South Africa game through injury, is also recalled.

SCOTLAND: R Sheehy (Midlothian); A Stanger (Hawick); A Tait (Newcastle); C Murray (Midlothian); C Johnnie (Lanark); G Tovey (Northampton); G Armstrong (Newcastle Falcons); G Scott (Newcastle Falcons); G Graham (West of Scotland); M Stewart (Northampton); G Weir (Newcastle Falcons); S Murray (Newcastle Falcons); R Wainwright (Dundee HSFP); A Scott (Dundee HSFP); S Holmes (Dundee HSFP); R Peters (Bath); C Murray (Hawick); A Nicol (Bath); P Wilson (Newcastle Falcons); D Dixon (Bath); G Scott (Dundee HSFP).

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CHANGING TIMES

مكتبة الأهل

FOOTBALL: MARRIAGE OF CONVENIENCE SUGGESTED TO GOALKEEPER AS POSSIBLE SOLUTION

Friedel faced with engaging dilemma

By MEL WEBB

THERE MAY be only two solutions that will allow Brad Friedel to continue to play football in Britain...

Friedel, 26, was understandably full of enthusiasm when he joined Liverpool from Columbus Crew...

A few weeks later, Friedel has not only failed to displace James but now knows that, if he does not play against Leicester City on Saturday...

The rules state that foreign players from outside the European Union must play a minimum of 75 per cent of first-team games...

Since then he has sat on the substitutes' bench in every game as James, widely criticised last season for his suspect handling and faulty judgment...

Friedel may soon be subjected to other pressures than mere frustration, and the two escape routes available to him, as outlined by a spokesman for the Department for Education and Employment...

"If Friedel gets married and his wife gets a job and a work permit over here, then he would not need one himself in the future as the spouse of someone who is already allowed to work in the country..."

"Lots of people have come into the country to work in this way. Normally it is the husband who gets a job, applies for and gets a permit, and then understandingly brings his wife with him..."

"In the Friedel situation, it will not be on the agenda - Friedel is engaged to an American and it is not known whether she is to apply for a job in Britain..."

Roy Evans, the Liverpool manager, has maintained since he signed Friedel that the American was not guaranteed a place in the Liverpool first team...

Liverpool would clearly not want Friedel to go because they would lose him permanently, but if that were the only way they could recoup their original expenditure, it might very well encourage other clubs to rescue the American from Anfield...



Friedel, the United States goalkeeper, is facing a predicament in the light of his inability to displace David James from the Liverpool team

played in the team. Friedel and Paul Stretford, his agent, have had a meeting with Evans to discuss the player's future...

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RUGBY LEAGUE

Change of rules may increase confusion

By CHRISTOPHER IRVING

THE insistence by the Rugby Football League (RFL) yesterday that the rules for the 1998 season are to be left unchanged means that Great Britain could be hindered in the autumn against Australia...

For the past two seasons in Britain, restarts have been made by the team that has just scored. The experiment has been abandoned after a year in the Australasian Super League now that it has formed a unified competition with the Australian Rugby League...

Joe Lydon, the RFL technical director, said: "It's important for coaches, players and supporters that we maintain stability on the field with regard to the rules."

There has been a need for change in Australia because of the coming together of the two leagues. Here, we don't want to confuse people with more rule changes. We will address the international rules situation as soon as the international fixture calendar is sorted out.

The World Cup has still to be officially postponed from the autumn to next year, but plans are being formulated for a triangular series between Britain, Australia and New Zealand. During the three-week break in July in the British Super League, Scotland, Ireland and France are due to take part in a tournament, with an additional match between England and Wales.

MOTOR RACING

FIA stall on decision

By OUR SPORTS STAFF

THE International Automobile Federation (FIA), motor sport's governing body, has delayed a decision on cancelling the Belgian Grand Prix until February 15. The Formula One race is under threat because of a Belgian law banning tobacco advertising...

The FIA said that it had taken the decision in order to allow certain procedures undertaken by the Belgian Royal Automobile Club, the Walloon region, the Spa Francorchamps circuit, the Liège province and local communities to reach a conclusion.

Despite the FIA maintaining that the Belgian Grand Prix is in its schedule for 1998, it said that unless the tobacco advertising ban, which is due to come into force next year, was lifted, the race, scheduled for August 30, would be cancelled. That would be a blow to the Belgian economy as the race creates 2,500 temporary jobs and brings in receipts of more than £16.8 million.

Last month, a court in Vevers refused to rule on whether the anti-tobacco law was unconstitutional - although the Belgian law is stricter than the one in the European Union, which allows tobacco companies to sponsor sports events until 2006.

China and South Africa are on standby to hold the race and, if the Belgian Grand Prix does not go ahead, it will join the French and Portuguese formulas on the sidelines of the Formula One season this year. The European Grand Prix has been taken away from Jerez.

Belated cup windfall for Walsall

By RICHARD HOBSON

WALSALL expect to earn almost £300,000 in gate receipts and commercial income from their FA Cup fourth-round tie at Manchester United on Saturday week. The National League second division club expect to sell their 8,500 allocation over the three days, with a home crowd of just 4,000. "It will be one of the biggest away followings in the history of the club," Roy Whalley, the commercial director, said.

Andy Watson, the only player to cost a fee in the side, scored both goals in the 2-0 win at Peterborough United. Victory represented a form of belated justice. Last season, Walsall led Burnley 1-0 in a second-round replay at Turf Moor when the floodlights failed. Burnley won the rearranged game on penalties to earn a lucrative third-round tie against Liverpool at Anfield.

Jan Sorensen, the Walsall manager, is used to the big occasion having played for Ajax, Bruges and Denmark. Mindful that Alex Ferguson, his United counterpart, may rest some regular first-team players, Sorensen has worked United's reserves in action last week. "I could not sleep on Tuesday night, I was so excited," Sorensen said. "I would be foolish to say we do not have any chance."

Even at 40, Steve Walker's appetite for the FA Cup seems insatiable. Last year, Walker helped Woking to a third-round replay against Coventry City. On Tuesday, he won a penalty, converted by Dale Watkins, as Cheltenham Town, from the Vauxhall Conference, earned a replay with a 1-1 home draw against Reading. However, Cheltenham's Conference colleagues, Hereford United, succumbed 3-0 at home to Tranmere Rovers.

After the controversy of the first game in London, when Steve Dunn, the referee, blew the final whistle as Wimbledon's Marcus Gayle was heading a corner by Neal Ardenley into the net, it was ironic that Wimbledon should feel aggrieved with another crucial decision involving the same two players in the replay. Again, Gayle flicked an Ardenley corner into the net. This time, Dunn over-ruled a linesman, who had flagged for offside. Wimbledon won 3-2 and travel to Huddersfield Town, who won 1-0 at Bourne-mouth. Bryan Robson, the Middlesbrough manager, rested several players and fielded three teenagers but his side beat Queens Park Rangers 2-0 at home in a replay. David Johnson's eighth goal in 12 games earned Ipswich Town, who beat Bristol Rovers 1-0, a fourth-round home tie against Sheffield United, 2-1 victors at Bury.



Cheltenham players celebrate their goal in the draw against Reading

Scotland seeded for Euro 2000

By OUR SPORTS STAFF

CRAIG BROWN said yesterday that he hoped Scotland would be placed in a six-country group when the Euro 2000 qualifying draw is made on Sunday in Ghent.

Scotland and England will be seeded for the tournament, but England were told yesterday that they would head a group of five teams. Germany, Italy and Spain also will head groups of five, but the other seeds and the remaining teams will be drawn into one group of five and four groups of six.

The seeding system means Scotland and England cannot be drawn in the same qualifying group, but could face Wales, Northern Ireland and Ireland.

Brown, the Scotland manager, said: "A group of six would give us ten matches and stops us looking for friendlies. The results against the bottom two clubs would be discounted and I believe this would give us more flexibility."

"It's a compliment to us that we are seeded and in the first pot. The good thing is that we avoid teams like Romania and Spain, who I believe are the top two in Europe at the moment. What it does mean, though, is that we will face tough opposition, especially from the second pot."

"I think we would settle for one of the bottom three, say the Czech Republic, Turkey or Greece. We would want to avoid the likes of Croatia, Portugal and France. It will be tough, whatever way you look at it, but we will take whoever we get."

The finals to be co-hosted for the first time, will be played in Belgium and Holland.

Meanwhile, Brown is under no illusions about the task in store when Scotland play Brazil in their opening World Cup match in Paris on June 10. "Brazil have so many players at their disposal, that they have three teams to choose from," he said.

"They have a team made up of players who are still in Brazil, then they have their European-based players, and then there is their best side, a combination of the two. You don't have to be an expert to guess which one they will field for the opening game of the World Cup."

Brown plans to watch the world champions next month in a friendly against Jamaica in Miami.

FOR THE RECORD

BASKETBALL table with columns for National Association (NBA), International Basketball Federation (FIBA), and various league results.

CRICKET table with columns for World Series Cup, Australia v New Zealand, and various match results.

World Series Cup table with columns for Australia v New Zealand, Sydney (Australia won toss), and various match results.

SNOW REPORTS

Table with columns for location, snow depth, conditions, runs to resort, weather, and last snow.

Table with columns for M. J. Home, C. G. Flanagan, and various match results.

Table with columns for South Africa, Australia, and various match results.

FOOTBALL

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ICE HOCKEY

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TODAY'S FIXTURES

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Old masters prove age is no concern

If you have ever feared that you are too old for that taxing game of tennis or that stamina-sapping half-marathon, think again. Unless, of course, you have already passed the age of 105. For, these days, the traditional Olympic aspirations of "faster, higher, stronger" are no longer the ultimate challenge. For that, you have to add "older". Age is the new frontier in sport and every season brings newborn tales of barrier-busting by the oldies.

Tomorrow, Joginder Singh, an athlete from India, arrives in New Zealand for the ninth Oceania Veteran Games at Hawkes Bay, where men compete from the age of 40 and women from 35. He is entered for the 100 metres, 200 metres, discus, hammer, shot and long jump.

If the prospect of six events leaves you feeling exhausted and inadequate, consider this: when Mr Singh skips down the aircraft steps in New Zealand, he will apparently be 105 years old. If his age is correct, he must be the world's oldest active sportsman and an inspiration to millions.

Singh is no newcomer to the track. A Sikh from the town of Patiala, he ran his early races in the days of the Raj, before the First World War. He recalls joining the Army in 1913 and fighting through the war. His first sporting career finished after the suicide of his son at the age of 13 in 1925.

He did not compete again until 1985 when he emerged, at the age of 93, to take part in a veterans' athletic meeting in his home town. Once he had regained the taste for competition there was no stopping him. Soon he was popping up in places as far apart as Kuala Lumpur and Helsinki, setting age-group records wherever he went.

Jim Tobin, the organiser of the Oceania Veteran Games, expects around 530 athletes from 16 countries for the championships, which start on Saturday. Singh is by far the oldest.

"Whether he's that age or not, I don't know," Tobin said. "His passport says

he's 105. It's hard to argue with that. He's something of a fixture on the veterans' circuit. I saw him compete in Finland in 1991. He runs well for a 105-year-old."

What everyone wants to know is what is Singh's secret—how do you live so long and stay so active? His reported training and lifestyle are amazing. He says that he goes for runs at three o'clock in the morning, covering up to 20 kilometres. He also rides a bicycle through the narrow lanes near his home.

He is a vegetarian, neither drinks nor smokes and lives on milk and Indian bread. Those who have seen the bearded Sikh in action say that he looks stately and majestic when run-

ning or cycling and in great shape, although his eyesight and hearing are fading.

Some raise doubts over his claim to be 105. Al Shephard, editor of the *National Masters News* in the United States, said: "When he turned up in Eugene, Oregon, eight years ago to compete as a 97-year-old there weren't many who could believe it. He looked and ran like a guy in his mid-seventies."

Shephard said that the World Association of Veteran Athletes does not recognise Singh's performances, among them running 100 metres in 20.82sec at the age of 99, because of the difficulty of proving his age. Other well-attested cases, though, provide

plenty of evidence that amazingly age-defying performances are possible.

Larry Lewis, from San Francisco, was still running six miles a day and working full-time as a waiter when more than a hundred. He continued to run and train with weights until shortly before his death at 106. Noel Johnson, from San Diego, took up exercise when he was 70, 40lb overweight and given six months to live. At 88, he set a world age-group best for the marathon of 7hr 40min 55sec. He ran and cycled until his death at 96.

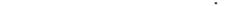
Last year, Everett Hoesack, from Ohio, flew to Britain to win three gold medals at the European indoor athletics championships in Birmingham at 95. He trains for an hour twice a week at a high-school track, sleeps for ten hours a night and eats lightly. With near perfect hearing, clear blue eyes and whiplash fitness, Hoesack, too, could pass for a man in his seventies, though there is no doubt about his age.

Coming up behind these indestructible old-timers are some remarkable veterans. Athletes in their forties have run a sub-four-minute mile and a marathon in 2hr 11min. This week, Joe Bugner regained the heavyweight boxing championship of Australia—at 47. And, in New Zealand, Derek Turnbull, 70 and dubbed "the fastest old man in the world", still competes in "open" as well as age-group events. In 1987 he became the first person more than 60 to run a marathon in under 2hr 40min.

Such men make time their friend. They defy the years and, like younger world record-breakers, give us a glimpse of what is possible and hope for the future. But even they are sometimes guilty of a backward glance at their days of glory. When I told Hoesack that he looked in great shape for a man of 95, he smiled nostalgically. "Ah, sir," he said with a twinkle, "you should have seen me when I was 92."

JOHN BRYANT

Singh still cycles and runs 20 kilometres every day at the age of 105



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Canine drug searchers

Animals in Uniform BBC2, 8.00pm.

Among the stars of the recent ITV documentary about the port of Dover were the dogs trained to sniff out illegal drugs. *Animals in Uniform* shows us what that training involves. Only 15 such animals are working in Britain but since 1993 they have found nearly £3 million worth of drugs. Jake, a black Labrador, and Jess, a pointer, could soon be joining them. First, though, they must complete an eight-week course run by the military on behalf of Customs and Excise and we follow them through it. In temperament the two animals could not be more different. But as they are set to work detecting heroin concealed in a plastic tube it emerges that Jess, though the more excitable, is also the more reliable. Senni Toksvig's brightly-spoken commentary continues to enliven a modest but likeable series.

Mrs Cohen's Mooney Channel 4, 8.00pm.

Trust Mrs Bernice Cohen, the small but voluble financial expert, to make your blood run cold. She starts her new series by talking about pensions and she can't wait to get to the state pension is small and starting the days of guaranteed pensions linked to final salary are fast disappearing and more than two million people have suffered from being sold the wrong personal pension. It is enough to make anybody give the pensions industry the widest possible berth and keep spare cash under the mattress, safe from rotten advice and salesman's inflated commissions. Mrs Cohen underlines her point by introducing two victims of pensions misselling and she takes her concerns to Mark Boleat, the head of the Association of British Insurers. His attempt to liken pensioners to things, replica football kits, does not go down well.

Blues and Twos ITV, 8.30pm.

The emergency services have become such a favourite subject for television documentary that you sometimes wonder whether police, fire and ambulance can do anything without a camera crew in tow. Tonight the lens is trained on a police

vehicle crime unit in Humberstone, on the lookout for car and motorcycle thieves. No such chase programme would be complete without a crash and, sure enough, the cops are soon in pursuit of a stolen car. But the film is not all screaming tyres, stolen cars and a good human story about PC Shaun Dixon and his wife Claire. As he patrols the streets and rooms directing him to potentially dangerous jobs. But she has been in the job long enough to develop a degree of professional detachment.

Louis Theroux's Weird Weekends BBC2, 9.30pm.

Much more English than his name suggests, Louis Theroux first came to prominence as a reporter on *Michael Moore's TV Nation*. Now he has his own series in which he applies Moore's quizzical investigative journalism to American subcultures. He starts with born-again Christianity in Texas and his method is to explore by taking part. This means a spot on a TV show run by husband and wife evangelists, helping one Randi James to recruit lost souls through car bumper stickers and attending Revival Day in which new believers come forward to be baptised. Through it all Theroux manages the not inconsiderable feat of charming everyone he meets while making it clear that he is not a believer and has no intention of becoming one. "Sunday mornings in Texas is no easy business in Dallas", he observes. Peter Waymark

Music Restored Radio 3, 10.15pm.

Even at this early stage it can be predicted with some confidence that when the radio quotes of the year come to be compiled, this will be a contender: "Being sandwiched between a violin by Stradivari and a piece of music by Bach is the ultimate humbling experience for a violinist". The quote is from Andrew Manze, who introduces this programme about violin restoration. I am a great admirer of fiddles and fiddle players, having been taught the instrument as a child: I had to give up because of an alarming drop in house values on the street where I was brought up. Almost all the 650 Stradivari violins which still survive have had to be rebuilt over the years to cope with the rigours of being played in modern concert halls.

Scenes from Provincial Life Radio 4, 7.20pm.

A three-part series in which novelists are asked to produce a documentary about the areas in which they live. Tonight Abdulrazak Gurnah examines the treatment of immigrants in Kent. It is a subject with a contemporary resonance, given the recent influx of gypsies from Eastern Europe. Gurnah was born in Zanzibar and his novels have displaced as their linking theme. Gurnah says that the first ferry carrying Romany asylum-seekers arrived at Dover while he was thinking about the documentary project and he was immediately reminded of his arrival in England 30 years ago. The programme ranges over other literary immigrants to Kent and considers the rise of National Front activity in Dover. Peter Barnard

World Service

RADIO 1

RADIO 2

RADIO 5 LIVE

VIRGIN RADIO

TALK RADIO

RADIO 3

RADIO 4

RADIO 5

RADIO 6

RADIO 7

RADIO 8

RADIO 9

RADIO 10

RADIO 11

RADIO 12

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RADIO 26

RADIO 27

RADIO 28

RADIO 29

RADIO 30

SWIMMING: RUSSIAN SPRINTER COMPLETES RECOVERY WITH RECORD TIME

Australians salute Popov as a champion

FROM CRAIG LORD-IN PERTH

ALEXANDER POPOV, the Russian known as the Tsar of swimming, retained his 100 metres freestyle crown at the world championships yesterday and, in the process, surpassed the achievements of Matt Biondi.

Less than 15 months after being stabbed in the stomach during a street brawl in Moscow that required ten hours of surgery, Popov, 26, surged to victory in a championship record of 48.93sec, with Michael Klim, his Australian training partner, second in 49.20. It was a coaching one-two for Gennadi Touretski, who brought Popov with him when he moved from Russia to the Australian Institute of Sport in Canberra in 1993—and it brought the Perth crowd to their feet, the chant of "Aussie, Aussie, Aussie" intended for both swimmers.

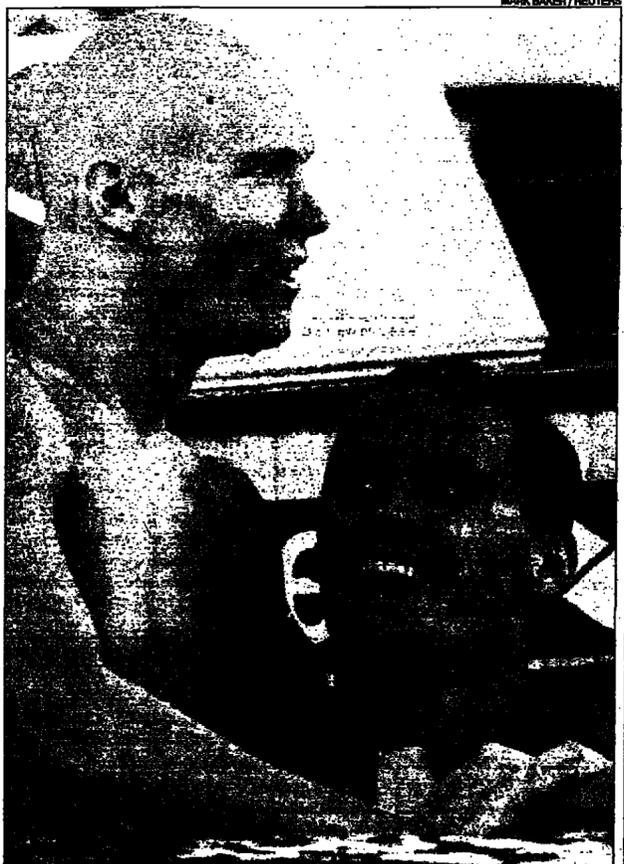
There can be no doubt now that the reign of Popov, 26, is the greatest in freestyle sprint history. In 1992, he beat Biondi, of the United States, for the Olympic title in 1994 he broke Biondi's world record; in 1996 he became the first since Johnny "Tarzan" Weissmuller in 1928 to retain the Olympic 100 metres title. Yesterday, he matched Biondi by retaining the world title, surpassing him by swimming inside 49 seconds for the sixth time (one more than the American) and shaving 0.01sec off the championship record, held by Biondi since 1986.

A modest man and a perfectionist, Popov merely said yesterday: "It's the usual victory, nothing spectacular." Popov, from Sverdlovsk at the foot of the Urals, was applauded to his blocks as warmly as Klim, the 20-year-old Polish-born immigrant who had won two gold medals earlier this week and qualified fastest for the final.

The Russian set the pace, turning first in 23.56sec, with three other men within half a second. From then on, it was business as usual for the man who trains up to 90 kilometres a week, far more than any distance swimmers. Klim acted as witness at Popov's wedding last year to Daria Schmelova, the former Russian medley swimmer, but Popov was the best man yesterday, his streamlined technique far superior to Klim's. He has not been beaten over 100 metres in leading international competition since his first appearance for Russia at the European championships in 1991.

When asked how national rivalry affected the preparation of Popov and Klim, Touretski shrugged and said that his swimmers would "stand back-to-back against the rest of the world". And what would happen when the world had been defeated? Touretski skirted any notion of internal battles. "Then, maybe, the world will come to me," he smiled.

Britain was the only nation to have two men—James Hickman and Stephen Parry—in the 200 metres butterfly final, which began on an acrimonious note after the referee, Ruben Dinaud, from Brazil, disqualified Scott Goodman, of Australia, for a deliberate false start. With the Australian crowd boating for the first time in the champion-



Popov, left, is congratulated by Klim after his record-breaking 100 metres freestyle.

ships, Goodman picked up a chair and threw it at the medal rostrum. Had he been allowed to race, he would have found the going tough. In the heats, Frank Esposito, of France, and Takashi Yamamoto, of Japan, had become the fifth and sixth men to swim faster than Imin 57sec, while Denis Silantiev, of Ukraine, became the eleventh fastest of all time, pushing the Britons to the outside lanes, seven and eight. Silantiev got the touch in 1:56.61, with Esposito shading Tom Malchow, of the US, for the silver and Yamamoto a touch behind in fourth. Hickman's fifth place in 1:58.76, just outside his national record, represented a rise of two places on the Olympic Games in 1996. Parry, winner of the bronze medal at the European championships last August, was sixth in 1:59.57.

In the women's 4 x 100 metres relay, Great Britain set a national record of 3min 45.30sec for seventh place, just ahead of China who, on paper, had been expected to win in world-record time. The race was won by the US.

Les Mauerer, of the US, took the 100 metres backstroke title, with He Chongyong, of China, the defending champion, last, almost three seconds outside her world record, set in 1994. China's only success came in the 400 metres freestyle, won by Chen Yan, 16, who claimed the 400 metres medley title on Monday.

Gillett, in the deciding set, Gillett took a 5-0 lead, but was pegged back to 5-5 when Anstey fluked the jack into the ditch for a full house. Drawing close on the next end, Gillett scored a match-winning double when Anstey was surprisingly overweight and off-target with his last three bowls.

In the Welsh indoor final, Williams, who had defeated Keran Peregrine, of Dinefwr, in the semi-finals, won the opening set 7-3 against Anstey, but lost the second and fell away in the third, failing to score a shot. Anstey promptly shot into a 5-0 lead in the fourth set, but Williams fought back superbly, squaring the set at 6-6, before an appropriately impressive draw from Anstey gave him the tie.

BOXING

Gatti dismisses Hamed as a joke

NASEEM HAMED'S stunning rise to stardom has failed to impress Arturo Gatti, the International Boxing Federation (IBF) super-featherweight champion (Srikumar Sen writes). Gatti claimed he would win easily if the pair were to meet. "I call him Prince but he might be my Princess after I've beaten him," he said in an interview to be shown tonight on Sky Sports's *Ringside* programme.

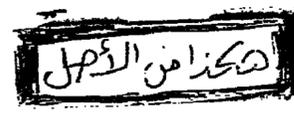
Those who have seen the tough Canadian in action know that he was not just trying to hype a contest with Hamed that HBO, the American cable television company, wants to put on this summer. Gatti, who takes on Angel Manfredy, of the United States, on Saturday, said: "Manfredy is a much

BOWLS

Gillett masters Welsh champion

LES GILLETT, from Banbury, who captured everyone's imagination on his television debut last October, faced his first big test since winning the International Open title, when he made a guest appearance in the CIS (Insurance) Welsh Masters at Llanelwyl yesterday (David Rhye Jones writes).

Gillett's adrenalin flowed freely against Mark Anstey, the new Welsh indoor champion from Merthyr Tydfil, and despite a few curious lapses, he booked his place in the quarter-finals today with a 7-2, 1-7, 7-5 victory. Anstey, 36, a nurse, won the Welsh title on Tuesday, beating Robert Woole, the defending champion, from Radnorshire, in the semi-finals, and Nigel Williams, of Swansea, in the final, and always looked capable of upsetting



Adding

SPORT

BRYANT'S EYE 42

105 not out:
how Joginder
keeps on running



CRICKET 38
England turn to
Tufnell for
mature approach

Bath gather evidence for inquiry Doctor raises doubt that Fenn was bitten

By MARK SOUSTER

THE first indications that the ear injury suffered by Simon Fenn of the London Scottish flanker, might not have been caused by a bite emerged yesterday as Bath continued its internal inquiry into the incident. Phillip Bliss, the club's honorary surgeon, said that, from discussions he had had with the doctor who treated Fenn, he understood that "there was no evidence that it was a bite".

Bath are collating evidence to be submitted to the Rugby Football Union (RFU) by tomorrow, ahead of a disciplinary hearing that is likely to be held next week. Bliss, who has held the position at Bath for 17 years, was not on duty during the fourth round Tedy's Bitter Cup match last Saturday, but has liaised with Cledwyn Jones, the surgeon who was "Mr Jones told me there were no teeth marks and his impression that there was no

tissue loss was confirmed by plastic surgeons at Roehampton, who spoke to him [Mr Jones] on Sunday," Bliss said yesterday.

It appears that Fenn, whose injury required 25 stitches, did not lose part of his earlobe in the incident, for which Kevin Yates, the Bath prop forward, has been suspended pending the investigation. Although photographs appear to show a chunk of Fenn's left ear to be missing, this is misleading. A flap of tissue was apparently hidden behind the ear and later stitched back into place. Bliss said: "There was no tissue loss. The point is, as far as I understand, and having discussed this at length with Mr Jones, there is no evidence that it was a bite. That is the feeling of Mr Jones. In basic terms, the only person who has said it was a bite was Fenn. It is perfectly arguable it could have been a stud and it

is also consistent with him having been caught on some other hard object." Bliss agreed that that could have been the heel or cap of a boot.

Dr Geoff Craig, a forensic odontologist at the University of Sheffield, said that teeth marks could provide proof of the identity of the culprit. "It all depends on the quality of evidence collected before the ear being repaired," he said. "It is possible to make an impression of the wound at the time of injury or, as would seem more likely in this case, a good quality enlarged colour photograph. There is no obstacle to making a comparison with the impression of a suspect's teeth."

Richard Yerbury, the chief executive of London Scottish, would not comment on the developments, except to say that the club was happy with its evidence. One avenue still being explored by Bath is whether the injury could have been caused by a player wearing a gumshield, which might not have left bite marks. The club also wants to establish that Fenn never had his left ear on the Bath side of the scrum, which would render any involvement by one of their front row unlikely.

Victor Ubogu, who, with Federico Mendez and Yates, had been cited by London Scottish, was yesterday considering legal action. Ubogu, 33, has been officially cleared by London Scottish, but believes that his reputation has been damaged.

Ubogu received support from Clive Woodward, the England coach, who also said that he had spoken to Yates by telephone on Tuesday night, when the player reiterated his innocence. Woodward assured him that he will remain part of the England squad pending the outcome of the inquiry, although Yates did not appear at the training session at Bisham Abbey yesterday because of the disruption his appearance would have caused.

Letters, page 19



Lea Maurer, of the United States, plunges into the water on her way to a gold medal in the women's 100 metres backstroke event in Perth

Chinese face calls for expulsion

FROM CRAIG LORD IN PERTH

CHINA was told to go home in shame by rival nations and condemned as a team of cheats and liars at the world swimming championships yesterday after four of its swimmers, all from Shanghai and among them a member of a world record-breaking relay team, tested positive for a substance used to mask performance-enhancing drugs.

News of the tests shortly after the end of the final session yesterday sent the swimming world reeling, coming just six days after synthetic human growth hormone was found in the luggage of Yuan Yuan, a breaststroke competitor, as she arrived at Sydney Airport on her way to Perth.

Yuan, already back in China, will serve a four-year suspension for "trafficking" in banned substances. First, the international governing body, said yesterday. It reserved a harsher penalty for Zhou Zhenwei, the China coach; 15 years' suspension from national and international work as a swimming coach, with the possibility of probation after ten years.

That pales by comparison to the life ban faced by Zhou Ming, personal coach to two of the four swimmers provisionally suspended yesterday pending the results of the B samples of the drug tests. Zhou, who accused the west of racism when asked about drugs in 1994, served a one-year suspension after two of his swimmers tested positive for dihydrotestosterone, an anabolic steroid, that same year. Life suspension is the penalty for persons committing second offences.

Zhou's swimmer, Cai Fufu, a member of the winning world record-breaking medley relay and silver medal winner in the 100 metres butterfly at the world short course championships last year — Wang Lina, Zhang Yi and a man, Wang

Wei, also coached by Zhou, tested positive for Triamterene, a diuretic, in out-of-competition tests carried out in Perth on behalf of Fina last Thursday, coincidentally the same day as the Sydney Airport discovery.

The news may account for woefully slow performances by some Chinese swimmers

Results: 41 Popov rules: 42

testers left, the team went to the opening ceremony and it was not until the following morning that the Chinese were called on to co-operate with testers again.

The next morning, 12 swimmers were hauled out of training at the competition pool in Challenge Stadium by ASDA testers in a very public swoop. It was that batch of tests from which the cheaters were caught.

The latest haul takes to 27 the number of Chinese swimmers to test positive for drugs, 22 of those for anabolic steroids and all this decade. The tally of Chinese cheats is just one shy of being half the number of all swimmers who have ever tested positive, including 16 for steroids from non-Chinese since 1972.

Guscott may return for Bath on Sunday

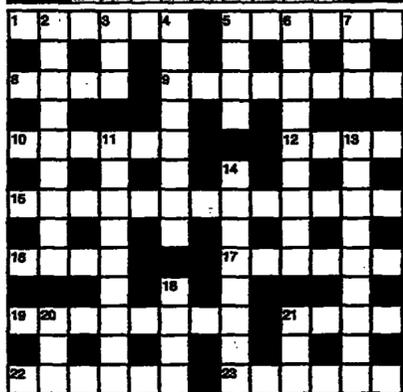
JEREMY GUSCOTT could make his comeback from injury against Newcastle in the Allied Dunbar Premiership on Sunday, increasing his chances of being available for England against France in the five nations' championship next month (Mark Souster writes).

The Bath centre has taken full contact in training this week and suffered no adverse reaction to the back injury that has prevented him from playing since September. His last full match was for the British Isles in the victory over South Africa on June 28, when Guscott kicked the decisive dropped goal. He broke his arm in the third international, in Johannesburg, a week later.

Speaking at Bisham Abbey, where the England squad met yesterday, Guscott, 32, said: "I would like to think I would definitely play before the end of the month. I am as fit as I possibly can be now, all I am lacking is the match fitness. Sunday is a possibility."

Neil Jenkins, the Pontypridd fly half, has had talks about a possible move to Bath next season. His contract at Saris Road expires this year. "I've been at Ponty for 12 years and during that time I've turned down a good few offers because I have been perfectly happy," he said. "It may be that I'll stay, but it could be also that Bath come in with a good offer I find difficult to turn down."

TIMES CROSSWORD



No 1303

- ACROSS
- Approval: influence from prestige (6)
 - Sir — Green Knight's opponent (6)
 - Eagerly expectant (4)
 - Presumes too long on (welcome) (8)
 - Fr. antiseptic drink (6)
 - A Channel Island (4)
 - Spoil plans, compass ruin (4,4,5)
 - Peg for sermon (4)
 - Take first steps (6)
 - Gather as eavesdropper (8)
 - Sharpen (knife) (4)
 - Hot spring (6)
 - The prairie wolf (6)
- SOLUTION TO NO 1302
- ACROSS: 5 Play the field 8 Sniper 9 Motive 10 Carp 12 Mopac 14 Mistrail 15 Poke 17 Claret 18 Effigy 20 Frankenstein
- DOWN: 1 Spine-chiller 2 Camp 3 New moon 4 Virtuoso 6 Turf 7 Level-pegging 11 Retiring 13 Wastrel 16 Mess 19 Flew

Walsh decides he will play on under Lara

FROM ALAN LEE
CRICKET CORRESPONDENT
IN KINGSTON

A SERIOUS threat of disruption to the start of the Caribbean Test series was lifted yesterday when Courtney Walsh, the deposed West Indies captain, put wounded pride and self-doubt aside to make himself available to play against England.

Walsh summoned the press to Sabina Park to hear a decision he had reached on Tuesday night only after prolonged soul-searching. "I had to ask a lot of questions of myself," he admitted, "but it is time to bury this thing now and to go on doing my best for West Indies cricket."

A significant factor in his decision to play — and to do so without publicly criticising the authorities — was the potential for unrest and antipathy towards his successor, Brian Lara, when the first Test starts here on January 29.

"I think he is going to need my support here in Jamaica," Walsh said. "There was a possibility that Brian might have got a rough time if I had given up. People have been speculating that things would have turned unpleasant and I had to bear that in mind."

"I also think a lot of people would have felt betrayed if I had retired. I have had messages and faxes from all over the world, which has taken me by surprise, and I want to thank all the well-wishers."

"Losing the captaincy was a big disappointment but I need to put all that behind me and think of the future. I think I have become a better person for my time as captain and I want to end all the talk of animosity between Lara and myself."

Walsh emerged from Jamaica's game with Barbados with ten wickets and most of the reassurance he needed. "I had to be sure I still had the appetite to play... I satisfied myself I still have plenty to offer. The worst thing would have been to go into this series not fully committed. I would hate anyone to say I was not trying, or that I was sabotaging the new captain. It should also be stressed that I am not doing this just to try and beat the West Indies wicket-taking record."

Walsh's decision will convince his good friend, Curtly Ambrose, to play one further series and will come as a relief both to the West Indies management and an administration, bracing itself for crowd trouble.

Meanwhile, however, problems continue to mount for the authorities here as doubts intensify over the staging of later Tests in Guyana and Antigua. The West Indies Board has admitted to concern over the political instability in Georgetown, where rioting and looting have followed the explosion of three bombs, and a switch of venue for the third Test, possibly to St Vincent, is increasingly likely.

Asprilla 'returns to Parma'

FAUSTINO ASPRILLA, the Newcastle United striker, has returned to Italian side Parma for £7 million, according to a Colombian radio station. Asprilla, 28, moved to Tyndale from the Serie A club for £7.5 million in 1996.

The station said that the Colombian agent, Gustavo Mascardi, and Parma officials confirmed the transfer. "Gustavo Mascardi had told me there was a chance of returning to Parma, but the news has taken me by surprise," said Asprilla when he was told by the station.

"For my career it will be excellent to return to the best soccer in the world. I feel very good at Newcastle, but the return to Parma makes me happy," he said. Asprilla's departure would further weaken Newcastle's already depleted resources up front.



Walsh: pledge of support

In The Saturday Times

Simon Barnes Talking Horse

PLUS Danny Baker and Steve McNamara

Saint and sinner Carlton Palmer on life at Southampton

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